Writing Skills at Secondary Level.
Developing an English Language Writing Syllabus – a case study

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Dedicated to my parents
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WRITING SKILLS AT SECONDARY LEVEL.
DEVELOPING AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING SYLLABUS – A CASE STUDY

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|Abstract|

Key-words: critical thinking, intercultural awareness, writing, case study, syllabus

Developing critical thinking and intercultural awareness are more than ever key issues in the EFL classroom. However, many course books seem not to uphold such a vision and lack interesting assignments which allow students to think and reflect upon experience and knowledge, as in the case for writing. This case study was set up as a response to the existing writing syllabus many teachers have to work with in the 11th grade in Portuguese secondary schools. Bearing in mind the needs and interests of an 11th grade class, and also the development of critical thinking and intercultural awareness, writing assignments, forming a new writing syllabus, were developed and put into practice in the classroom throughout the school year. As a result of this case study, students’ interest in writing was aroused and the new syllabus was seen to be more motivating and challenging, hence replacing the one students had worked with so far. In the future, this new writing syllabus will continue to be used, and it can be reinvented and adapted by each teacher, according to the characteristics of the target-group.

|Resumo|

Palavras-chave: pensamento crítico, consciência intercultural, escrita, estudo-caso, programa

O desenvolvimento de pensamento crítico e de uma consciência intercultural são mais do que nunca áreas-chave na sala de aula de Línguas Estrangeiras. No entanto, muitos manuais escolares ainda parecem não defender esta visão e primam pela ausência de atividades interessantes que façam os alunos pensar e refletir sobre a sua experiência e conhecimento, como no caso da escrita. Este estudo-caso foi desenvolvido como resposta ao programa existente para a escrita com o qual muitos professores trabalham no 11º ano. Tendo em conta as necessidades e interesses de uma turma de 11º ano, e também o desenvolvimento do pensamento crítico e consciência intercultural uma série de atividades de escrita, formando um novo programa, foi desenvolvida e posta em prática na sala de aula durante o ano letivo. Como resultado deste estudo-caso, o interesse dos alunos na escrita aumentou e o novo programa foi visto como mais motivador e desafiante, substituindo desta forma aquele com que os alunos tinham trabalhado até ao momento. No futuro, este novo programa para a escrita continuará a ser utilizado, e permite igualmente que seja reinventado e adaptado por qualquer professor, tendo em conta as características da grupo-alvo.
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Introduction

The case study here presented started gaining shape in the context of the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language course in 2007. There had always been a deep interest on my part in intercultural awareness and critical thinking, and a small-scale action research project gave me the reason to investigate further, as I lacked the theoretical background to much of what was done in the classroom. Writing had also always been an area of interest, and so the opportunity to link these three areas arose with this case study. This approach was chosen as it is “more focused or specific, more accessible […] and possibly also more interesting in human terms” (Wallace, 2002:164).

In 2008, a small-scale action research project under the title “How can I develop my students’ sense of identity and cultural awareness in the classroom through reading?” was carried out. That action research focussed on how students perceive and deal with culture in their classroom and how course books embraced the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) when it came to intercultural awareness. Through research I came to understand there is an enormous gap between theory and practice, and new solutions needed to be implemented, as one of the aims of teaching modern languages is to promote mutual understanding and empathy, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication, all of which are deeply embedded in the CEFR.

Communication calls upon the whole human being. […] As a social agent, each individual forms relationships with a widening cluster of overlapping social groups, which together define identity. In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture. It must be left to teachers and the learners themselves to reintegrate the many parts into a healthily developing whole. (Council of Europe, 2001:1)

Having focussed on reading, the time came to focus on another skill, perhaps one of the most difficult ones to be taught in our classrooms: writing. Brookes and Grundy argue that for a long time the teaching of writing has been neglected for too long, and a greater emphasis has been placed on the aural/oral approach (Brookes & Grundy, 1998:10). So, presently there was the need to take a further step as to make it more meaningful, motivating and challenging for students, as Indrisano & Squire also claim.

Students and their teachers are finding that writing can be a powerful means of making sense of experience and constructing meaning. Whether first graders or engineering

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1 For more information on how the CEFR influenced the Portuguese English syllabus, see pages 27 to 32.
majors in college, students can be shown how to use writing to think, understand, and learn. (Indrisano & Squire, 2000:14)

More than ever, English is said to be the *lingua franca* of the world. We all live in a global community where advances in transportation and technology have enabled us to interact with people from all over the globe. Therefore, it is essential for students to possess knowledge of this language, or their ability to interact beyond Portuguese borders might be compromised.

Nowadays,

[1]anguages are taught as a system of communication rather than as an object of study. The traditional view in language classes that writing functions primarily to support and reinforce patterns of oral language use, grammar, and vocabulary, is being supplanted by the notion that writing in a second language is a worthwhile enterprise in and of itself. (Weigle, 2002:1)

This idea is both valid when teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially as students communicate through social media networks every day (Facebook, Hi5, Twitter, Google+, among others). Both terms, ESL and EFL, refer to the use or study of English by speakers with a different first language, though they do not mean exactly the same thing. ESL refers to the use of English in an English-speaking region, by someone whose first language is not English. In the UK, Ireland and New Zealand, this term has been replaced by English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). As for EFL, it refers to English being used in a non-English-speaking region, by someone whose first language is not English, such as in Portugal.

This case study focuses on the development of critical thinking and intercultural awareness through writing in the EFL classroom at a private school in Lisbon. The target group is one of five 11th grade classes, consisting of 30 students. According to students, writing has been one of the least practised skills in the classroom, unlike speaking. They also added most activities presented in the course book are not at all motivating for many of them, as they lack authenticity. In a questionnaire² (see Appendix 1) students answered at the beginning of the school year, one student even says: “In my opinion writing in English should be in a way that students actually feel motivated to write about a certain topic rather

² At the beginning of the school year, students were given a questionnaire, which covered their attitudes towards writing, in and outside the classroom. By realising what their strengths and weaknesses were, and with the help of the literature review, I would be able to devise my writing syllabus and get them started. This questionnaire was adapted from “Motivating Student to Write” by John Elliot (see bibliography section).
than doing it in order to have good marks” (see Appendix 2). Therefore, there is a need to change some of the activities presented in the course book so as to make them suit their interests and needs.

Despite its importance, writing “has tended to be a much neglected part of the language programme” (White & Arndt, 1991:1). Although it is not like this in all cases, it still holds true to this day. The communicative approach has been praised, but communicative competence has many times been narrowed down to speaking, when it should involve all the other existing skills. This concept was first introduced by Dell Hymes (1966, 1972), and has since then been discussed and redefined by many other authors. According to him, speakers of a language have to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language. They need to know how that same language is used by members of a speech community in order to accomplish their purposes (Hymes, 1972:277). For example,

> a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. (Hymes, 1972:277)

It is through writing we are able to express our thoughts, dreams, feelings and opinions. “Others still go beyond the obvious and exercise the power of imagination, freeing the child within and creating a magical world only a few can understand” (Cachão, 2010:2). Writing allows us to create meaning in very different ways. In the classroom, it is “an essential tool for learning” (Weigle, 2002:5) as students, even in secondary school, have to deal with controversial issues and writing gives them the time to think, evaluate and come up with their own views of the world. As Weigle further points out, “it is important to view writing not solely as the product of an individual, but as a social and cultural act” (Weigle, 2002:19). This is an approach I will be focussing on later, as it deeply influenced this case study and all activities brought into it. If we are to promote the process of learning a foreign language, varying the activities and resources during the lesson, and during the school year is extremely important. If we use the same activities repeatedly, our students are indeed less likely to learn.

While receptive skills such as reading and listening are often the starting point when learning a language, writing and speaking, which are productive ones, are seen as “culturally
specific, learned behaviours” (Douglas Brown, 2001:334), much like the ability to swim or ride a bicycle. And writing is “probably the most difficult thing to do in a language” (Nunan, 1999:271), another reason behind this project work and the need to improve the way it is dealt with in our classrooms. We might learn how to write just as we learn how to swim, but still it does not mean we are skilled at it. As was once told, probably no one has ever learnt how to swim by being thrown into the water, just as no one will ever learn how to write simply by being told to do so. Every writer needs to practise before they become good writers. They need to develop this skill and build up competence and confidence so they can progress towards autonomy, independence from the teacher and start writing on their own.

According to Little,

“autonomous learners draw on their intrinsic motivation when they accept responsibility for their own learning and commit themselves to develop the skills of reflective self-management in learning; and success in learning strengthens their intrinsic motivation. Precisely because autonomous learners are motivated and reflective learners, their learning is efficient and effective (conversely, all learning is likely to succeed to the extent that the learner is autonomous).” (Little, 2007)

As mentioned previously, this case study also began with the need to understand why so many students have difficulties when it comes to writing, and what type of difficulties they have (if related with vocabulary, grammar, organisation, coherence, content or simply motivation), and with it the following research questions arose:

1. How does the official Portuguese English Language Syllabus deal with writing?
2. How can I motivate my students when it comes to writing?
3. Is their course book meeting their needs and interests?
4. What resources should I be using to get them to think critically about the topics covered, and to develop their intercultural awareness?
5. How can I help them improve their writing skills?

In an attempt to answer all these questions, this case study was set up and carried out throughout the school year. In the beginning there is an introduction to the importance of writing within the EFL classroom, which serves as a lead-in to Chapter 1. In Chapter 1 there is an overview of the relevant literature, which served as a basis for this project work. In 1.1 there is an introduction to writing in the EFL classroom, and some of the difficulties teachers and students come across. In 1.2 the two main existing approaches to writing are described in detail. 1.3 deals with motivation and the existing limitations to writing in the classroom, as these deeply influence what we do on a daily basis, and 1.4 deals with learner preferences and
multiple intelligences, which are also directly related to motivation in the classroom. By addressing students’ needs, they will be more interested in the activities/tasks being presented, and so writing will become a natural, pleasant activity. In 1.5 the focus will move on to the importance of the CEFR within the Portuguese teaching context, and the role of writing within our Official Portuguese School Syllabus, and the course book adopted by the school. There is also a section on intercultural awareness, which gained recognition with the CEFR. In 1.6 there is an emphasis on critical thinking, which is fundamental in this case study and influenced most of the writing activities. In Chapter 2 the educational context will be clarified by describing the school and the class involved in this case study, as well as the methodology and procedure used and the initial findings. Finally, Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical and pedagogical implications brought up by this project work, both for the present and future.
Chapter 1 – Review of Literature

1.1. Writing in the EFL classroom

As stated in the introduction, writing is perhaps the least often practised skill by most learners of any foreign language, except possibly for students taking academic English. In Portugal, as a part of the curriculum, students should learn how to write different types of text, such as formal and informal letters, argumentative essays, short comments on texts/articles they have read, or even reports. However, the development of good writing skills requires a lot of time and effort, and so both teachers and students often neglect it, also because it is rarely assessed in its own right. As a consequence, little emphasis is given to its systematic teaching in many classrooms.

Writing is indeed a “complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time” (Nunan, 1999:73). Writing practice in the form of timed activities and tasks which require students to write a letter, an article or a report within a given time, during the lesson, is rare, and it is most often used as a test of grammar or vocabulary knowledge. In Portugal, in many English written tests, writing is assessed at the same time as use of English or reading comprehension are assessed, which means there is no clear division between them, and students might not get enough credit for their understanding of a text, for instance.³ There is also a need for more authentic, relevant tasks, as these will motivate students and writing will become something more pleasurable. It is not only necessary for students to have the appropriate vocabulary, register or layout, they frequently need to have a certain maturity and understanding of the topics covered as to be able to reflect and then write about them. By having writing tasks they can relate to and which challenge them, hopefully some of the obstacles faced by students will be overcome, and they will also be “open⁴ to new ideas and perspectives. They are willing to challenge their beliefs and investigate competing evidence.” (Kurland, 2000)

There are a number of different reasons why students are asked to write, be it in the classroom or at home. Most EFL course books adopted by Portuguese schools have reading

³ If one analyses the Reading Paper from First Certificate in English (FCE), which can be found in <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/fce/index.html>, it is clear there is no writing involved when the understanding of a text is the main task. Multiple choice questions allow the student to clearly focus on content. Writing only becomes central in the Writing Paper. This is the opposite of what actually happens in most of our English written tests at state or private schools.

⁴ Emphasis in the original.
comprehension questions, which students have to answer\(^5\), short quotes in need of a comment, or longer writing activities which students are asked to do in the classroom, or at home. “Comprehension exercises on a text are a well established way of providing writing practice of various kinds” as “they allow the written medium to be used for the expression of personal opinion within a context provided by the text” (Byrne, 1979:75), which provides students with a safety net. However, in my experience, not only do they feel it is often too difficult or tedious to write, but they are also afraid of making mistakes and letting the teacher down, and themselves, as they simply do not know what to write about or how to get started. The questionnaire students answered at the beginning of the school year made this clear, and having identified some of their difficulties and needs it was easier to work on them. As Scrivener puts it, “much writing work in the classroom falls on a continuum of how much restriction, help and control is offered, from copying to unguided writing” (2005:193), and teachers can undoubtedly help them get started (see Appendix 3 for further examples).

According to Ur, writing is mainly used for three particular reasons: as a means, as an end or both as a means and an end. Many times still, “writing is widely used within foreign language courses as a convenient means for engaging with aspects of language rather than the writing itself” (Ur, 2002:162), which contradicts the emphasis given to writing in the introduction as a means of communication between people in a global world. Students are required to write down vocabulary or answer reading comprehension questions, for example. If used as an end in itself, students will be requested to produce original texts (i.e. creating their own meanings) with a purpose and an audience in mind. Content and organisation are observed because there is a purpose for writing. However, writing can be seen as a combination of the two, both as a means and an end simultaneously, which brings together “purposeful, original writing with the learning or practice of some other skill or content.” (Ur, 2002:162)

Some of the reasons why people write have already been addressed in the introduction. Most importantly, writing is used to express the diversity of ideas and/or feelings which surrounds every individual in society. Content should arguably be seen as the most important aspect of writing, though the writer needs to pay attention to formal aspects as well. As Ur (2002:170) asserts, it is necessary to correct language mistakes, but they should not be the basis for the evaluation of a piece of writing since the content presents a bigger role. She further goes on to say that it is not necessary to correct all mistakes in a text,

\(^{5}\) Rarely are students given multiple choice questions when it comes to reading comprehension.
but the most notorious ones, which really affect meaning (Ur, 2002:171).

1.2. Approaches to teaching writing

Although there have always been different approaches to teaching writing over a long period, the focus in this paper will be on the last thirty years. Since the 1980s there have been many approaches to teaching writing. Teachers found themselves immersed in these; not knowing which one would be the best to meet their students’ needs. Basically there have been two main approaches: the product and the process approaches.

1.2.1. The product approach

In *Teaching English Writing* (1982), Pincas recognised that writing is a communicative skill. She advocated the ‘product approach’, in which writing was all about linguistic knowledge, appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices, although she also mentions it “should go beyond merely reinforcing grammar and vocabulary lessons and deal quite specifically with those skills that are required for effective writing” (Pincas, 1982:2).

In this approach, there are three stages: familiarisation, controlled/guided exercises and free writing. In the first stage, students were made aware of the characteristics of a particular type of text they would be writing later on. Afterwards, in the second stage, they would first practise by repeating the language “in controlled exercises, and then gradually move towards guided exercises that allow more freedom” (Pincas, 1982:18). Finally, in stage three, they would write freely and “feel as if they are creating something of their own” (Pincas, 1982:22). She believed this approach would “provide a systematic and effective basis for a writing lesson” (Pincas, 1982:23).

Pincas believed learning to be ‘assisted imitation’ (Pincas, 1982:24) and therefore she would have students working with substitution tables and later writing on their own. It becomes clear writing is used to promote language acquisition through existing models rather than fostering creativity or language acquisition, this being one of its weaknesses. Students only need to follow a particular structure, use the guidelines and key vocabulary provided by the teacher and rearrange the text according to what is required, which means “that the knowledge and skills students bring to the classroom are undervalued” (Badger & White,
1.2.2. The process approach

White & Arndt (1991) and Hedge (1998) brought forward the ‘process approach’, very different from what had been Pincas’ approach, and which seems to be more effective to this day. As Badger & White (2000:154) mention in their article, “writing in process approaches is seen as predominantly to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge about grammar and text structure”. Hence, in the process approach students are to reflect upon what they are going to write about and how they are going to do it. It helps them focus on the process itself and its various stages: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing stages (Tribble, 1996; Badger & White, 2000).

In the figure below, writing is presented as a complex and interactive process, showing that students should know how to organise their thoughts in an appropriate way. Many of them, though, do not know where to start or what to write about until ideas start floating up in their heads. Then there is a need to move backwards to revise and evaluate what has been written, and forward again to continue writing. “You cannot write without filtering information: as we write, we think about what to write and how to represent our experience. Indeed, we may well find that writing helps us to come to terms with our experience and understand it better” (Brookes & Grundy, 1998:4).

Figure 1: Model of writing introduced by White & Arndt (1991:3).
Teachers are to facilitate students’ writing, and help them overcome their difficulties. They are to draw out the learners’ potential (Badger & White, 2000:154). To achieve a good balance between all different stages, the amount of time spent planning and revising will vary according to the type of writing that has been required from students. In this sense, a holiday postcard might be written spontaneously, whereas a letter of complaint will take longer to write, and will require a different approach. In this sense, the process approach reveals one of its first weaknesses, as not all text types demand the same type of processes, and in most cases, what you get from a writing task should be more important than the processes you have to go through, especially because the language is not previously handed out to students and they need to think carefully about the content. Also, writing a postcard comes much more naturally than writing an argumentative essay, and students need less preparation.

Based on research and classroom practice, the best solution would be to integrate these two approaches, when possible, and get the best out of each, which is also advocated by many teachers nowadays. On one hand, a process approach appears to offer students more opportunities for learning than a product approach as students learn more from their mistakes as they go through each of the stages and feel motivated to do better. On the other hand, a product approach offers students a model they can draw information from and gives them confidence to get started. Most importantly, writing has to be seen as an educational activity, which involves thinking, cooperation and learning. Hopefully students will also grow beyond their own world, as writing will allow them to focus more on content, which requires deeper thinking skills, or a deeper understanding of realities, cultures and languages which are very different from theirs. This might also motivate them when it comes to writing as the topics will be more engaging and challenging for them.

1.3. Motivation and limitations to writing in the classroom

I am sitting here in this classroom and you don’t seem to be interested in what I do, where I do it, who I meet, my beliefs, my way of talking. You then ask me to write about “The week-end” or “A bad day”. I can’t do it. You will not be an interested audience. (Rosen, 1985:251)

I first came across Michael Rosen when taking English Didactics in the Arts Faculty at the University of Coimbra, and this particular quote holds true in any given teaching context. The students we have in our classrooms bring many things with them into their learning atmosphere. They bring their language, their culture, values and beliefs, their
personality and their preferences. And as Rosen states, “when the cultural identity of the young person is received with interest, many flowers bloom” (Rosen, 1985:251), and teachers are seen as ‘an interested audience’.

When it comes to writing, short stories, poetry inspired by songs or pictures, advertisements, newspaper articles, argumentative texts, among other pieces of writing, are not only motivating but also educationally useful and creative. These are the ones students seem to like best as it gets them to use their imagination and it also gives them the opportunity to think critically about certain issues, which are many times controversial (see Appendix 4). As Ur argues,

[writing] is potentially satisfying. If you are writing on a topic about which you feel you have something worthwhile or interesting to say, the process of writing can be absorbing and enjoyable; and if it is worked through to a final product, most people feel pride in their work and want it to be read. It is therefore worth investing in topics and tasks that motivate learners to write; and extremely important to provide an appreciative reader audience, whether teacher or co-learners. (Ur, 2002:169)

However, beginning to write is not that easy, as previously mentioned. One student said, and I quote: “Sometimes I have difficulties on starting writing in English because my thoughts are not really organised, but apart from that, in general, I like to write and speak English”. First and foremost, teachers need to find activities which will motivate their students to write. If students do not feel involved, they will probably not respond the way we expect them to. In his book, Learning Teaching, Scrivener (2005) presents us with real-world writing tasks, which our students will find relevant and motivating. Students could be asked to write real letters or emails to people they have met or not, addressing real issues which concern them; they could publish their own newsletter or take part in the school magazine; send comments, replies to discussions, reviews or websites, and get feedback from other readers. (Scrivener, 2005:194-196) These can be done either in or outside the classroom.

Students do tend to ignore writing for a number of other reasons. The purpose of the activities, especially those found in course books, are rarely authentic and students lose interest. In the course book Easy Biz (Torre & Pais, 2008), for instance, students are

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6 More information on Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences in section 1.4.
7 This handout was given to students in class, and it led to a debate on ethical issues. All skills can positively influence each other – reading might, for instance, influence speaking and writing.
8 Comment by another student in the questionnaire given at the beginning of the school year.
9 Having done some of those writing activities the previous school year, it became clear students were not motivated by them nor thought they would be of any relevance to their future lives.
introduced to the structure of a letter of complaint through a listening activity (see Appendix 5\textsuperscript{10}). Firstly, they are shown two letters of complaint and in the end they are given a situation and have to write their own letter of complaint – an LCD TV, which broke down. When the students (aged 16) were asked to evaluate this task in class, all students who spoke said it was not authentic and that they had never bought an LCD TV. They also commented on the fact that it was strange listening to a letter of complaint being read out over the phone. Authenticity plays an important role when it comes to getting students to write, as it gives them a real reason to do so. Moreover, when there is a lack of activities likely to foster process writing in the course books themselves, it is even harder for students to get into the whole process of writing and knowing which steps to take.

Coming up with fresh ideas is very difficult for some students, and they may require more help from the teacher and their colleagues before they start, and organising these same ideas is also problematic as it is a skill that needs practising. As a way of helping students, Oxford University Press launched the 8\textsuperscript{th} edition of their Oxford Advanced English Dictionary (2010) with the iWriter tool, which helps students learn how to best organise a text (argumentative, essay, article, etc.) and which also gives them good examples for each type of genre they come across, which links with the model presented by Pincas. In a way, this also helps them on their way to becoming more autonomous, as the teacher will not always be there to guide them, and they will soon have to master this skill.

Teachers, on the other hand, also face several difficulties when they ask students to write. Even before starting, there is a need to look at the syllabus, at the course book, and more closely at the year plan and analyse what will be covered – content and grammar. Unfortunately, most course books used in Portuguese schools often present students with uninteresting, unrealistic, unstimulating activities. We then need to adjust or create new motivating, meaningful activities, which will suit our students’ interests and needs. Time constraints are another drawback for two reasons. First of all, the number of topics to be covered throughout the year leaves us with little time for taking up writing as a process, and writing assignments are then neglected or set as homework. This is not always the case, but it does happen. In the 11\textsuperscript{th} grade there are four modules to be covered\textsuperscript{11}, and in the course book

\textsuperscript{10} This activity is not included in this project work. However, it was adapted and done in class. Students had to either write a letter complaining about a T-shirt they had bought and which was wrongly labelled, or write an article telling about a bad shopping experience.

\textsuperscript{11} For full content of the course book, see Appendix 13.
adopted at my school, each has three separate units, except for module 4, which only has two units.

Secondly, it takes time to assess all the assignments given to students and when classes have up to 30 students, it really becomes time-consuming. When we have 200 students, if not more, and 70 of these are in the 11th grade, finding the time to mark all the assignments can become very challenging. This is also why “it is therefore worth investing thought in the selection of topics and tasks that motivate students to write” (Ur, 2002:169), as it will also be easier for them to write about them and for us to be reading them. When students enjoy a particular writing task, they devote time to it. This might mean they will take more care and make fewer errors, which will help teachers in the correction and feedback process.

My emphasis in this case study came to be more on content, and on the development of a list of activities which would replace the existing syllabus, and less on errors as most of these students had a good, if not excellent level of English for their age/grade. What they really lacked was motivation, a reason for dipping into writing. It is a known fact that most students “make mistakes on the road to communicating their messages. The teacher’s first response is to the meaning” (Graves, 1985:8), encouraging them to communicate. Although this comment has been made almost thirty years ago, as a teacher, my attention has always fallen primarily on students’ wish to communicate, and afterwards on the language itself. By giving them positive feedback and encouragement they understood making mistakes is a part of the learning process, and writing does not have to be a problem. Taking in consideration Ur’s words, “I would rather invest time and energy in creating opportunities for learners to get things right as much as possible than in painstaking work on correcting mistakes” (Ur, 1996:255).

Another final aspect which has been limiting students’ writing is the extent to which a student’s first language might interfere with writing in another language that is not his/hers. Douglas Brown (2001:323) suggests teachers should adopt a “weak” position when dealing with first language interference, as students’ “cultural/literacy schemata” might be “one possible difficulty”. He believes students’ native language and traditions should be valued, and they should be led to understand that same schemata, and not ignore it. Learning a second or foreign language hopefully opens their eyes to the world – to the known and the unknown - which might be seen as an added motivation. As Kayman (1997:21) clarifies
…to see the other, and himself, as ‘foreign’ – with all the anxiety, dissatisfaction, enthusiasm and passion that this implies – [...] is a proper basis for our discipline. The position of the foreigner, characterised in this way, is hard; as it should be hard to study a foreign culture, to ‘translate’ its texts, to come to terms with the anxiety produced by the foreignness of languages and the otherness of culture. It is to put ourselves out of home, [...] that does, and should unsettle us, in relation to ourselves, and what we think of our own” culture.

Intercultural competence will be covered later in this chapter and examples of how we can add this element into our lessons will also be presented later on in Chapter 2 when we look at the methodology and procedure used throughout this case study.

1.4. Learning styles and multiple intelligences

Diversity is the order of the millennium.
(Gardner, 1999:217)

Throughout the ages, the notion of ‘intelligence’ has been in constant change. While for the Greeks being intelligent meant having physical agility, rational judgment, and virtuous behaviour, for the Romans it meant being courageous. In our society, in the beginning of the twentieth century, “the intelligent person was one who could be dispatched to the far corners of the empire and who could then execute orders competently” (Gardner, 1999:1).

At the turn of the millennium, Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences proposal in Frames of Mind challenged what the concept of ‘intelligence’ meant to most people. He then defined it as “the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings.” (Gardner, 1983:xiv). Nearly two decades later, he redefined it and now perceived “intelligence as a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture.” (Gardner, 1999:34), meaning it might or might not be activated. It will all depend on the setting we are in and all the factors which influence our learning and personal decisions, hence our intellectual ability.

In Frames of Mind, he proposed seven separate categories of human intelligence, adding another one later in Intelligence Reframed (1999) (see Appendix 6). We come to understand there are students who are ‘number smart’, others who are ‘kinaesthetic smart’ and others ‘music smart’. In this sense, a student who is kinaesthetic smart will learn better if moving around and interacting with things. The main idea is that we all have a special
preference in the way we learn things and there are, at least, eight well-known intelligences, if not more. It is true that it is impossible to predict how our students will react to certain activities and tasks, but using multiple intelligences might make our lessons more personalised and our students will feel we are trying to get through to them.

Together with multiple intelligences, there are also different approaches or ways of learning. Nunan described learning style as

any individual’s preferred ways of going about learning. It is generally considered that one’s learning style will result from personality, including psychological and cognitive make-up, socio-cultural background, and educational experience. (Nunan, 2000:168)

As to find out more about these, Reid (1987) developed the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). It assessed students’ different learning styles based on their own perceptions: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile, and two social aspects of learning: individual or in group (Mulalic, 2009:105). Very briefly, the visual learner prefers studying using written notes, recalls information better by visualising the source, tends to avoid oral production and when asked to speak, will keep his/her production to a minimum. The auditory learner prefers listening to the teacher, and writing down their notes afterwards. The kinaesthetic learner needs periods of reflection between tasks, uses movement and rhythmic routines to learn better (hands-on approach) and might have difficulty in sitting down for long periods of time, becoming distracted. The tactile learner, on the other hand, has a very short concentration span, and needs to see, hear and do in order to learn12.

In order to find out more about my students’ preferred learning styles and multiple intelligences, they were given an online multiple intelligences’ test at the beginning of the school year developed by the Birmingham City Council13 (see Appendix 7). They answered this questionnaire at home, and then only had to send me the code which would allow me to see the final graph. This is one of the tools teachers can use to know their students better. They might even motivate students and get them more involved in the learning process. In the end, “their level of interest in language learning is likely to rise, even if they do not belong to the group of people with a strong linguistic intelligence” (Puchta, 2006). Teachers should help students discover their individual learning preferences.

12 Taking in consideration that in Portugal classes can go from 45 minutes up to 90 minutes, students who are either tactile or kinesthetic might have a serious difficulty in remaining silent and quiet in their seats. In this sense, they might require more attention from the teacher when preparing a lesson, as their attitude might disturb the whole class.
13 In <http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks3/ict/multiple_int/questions/questions.cfm> This questionnaire allowed me to visualise some of their possible strengths and weaknesses as learners, and how to go about teaching writing, as they responded differently to different stimuli. For instance, the diagnostic test they did afterwards came to prove some of them are really more visual than others; or more musical than others.
Therefore, when in a classroom, each student is unique and each is influenced in a particular way when learning. They might learn more effectively if they are the ones in charge of their own learning process. When students’ learning styles are matched with the adequate teaching approaches, their motivation, performance and achievement will be highly influenced (Brown, 1994). “Clearly, ESL/EFL learners need to be empowered with a wide range of learning strategies to achieve competence and autonomy in learning the target language.” (Kang, 1999:9) When it comes to writing, by having different types of writing activities, students might feel more inclined to enjoy writing and take pleasure from it. For example, listening to music might be more motivating for some students, whereas looking at a picture might be more motivating for others. In the same way, some students might feel more at ease if they are writing on their own, whereas others might feel more confident if they are working in pairs or within a group. It is up to the teacher to decide how each activity, each task will be laid out in the classroom. If teachers draw on their students preferred multiple intelligences as to motivate them and facilitate their learning, they will also become more conscious of their own learning styles and might even develop all other intelligences they are not so strong at.

1.5. Critical thinking and writing skills

Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (...). The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise. (Kant, 1929:93).

It all started 2,500 years ago with Socrates who realised people could not rationally justify many of their assertions. Through reflection and questioning, he was able to lay the foundations for critical thinking, by getting people to distinguish between those beliefs that are rational and those which lack adequate evidence or reasoning.

Over the last century, many were the authors defining and writing about ‘critical thinking’, and most of them agree on some of the dimensions it has: knowledge, cognitive skills and a willingness to be a critical thinker. Dewey, a twentieth-century American educational theorist, is believed to have been the ‘father’ of modern critical thinking. He named it ‘reflective thinking’ and came to define it as “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1909:9). His view contrasts with a passive reception of ideas and information as well as the practice of jumping to
conclusions. Years later, Glaser (1941:5), co-author of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, built on Dewey’s definition and described it as an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come with the range of one’s experience; knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning; and some skill in applying those methods.¹⁴ On a statement for the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction, Paul & Scriven reinforced Glaser’s definition by saying it is “that mode of thinking – about any subject, content or problem – in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skilfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards (...) upon them.” (Paul & Scriven, 1987)

Undoubtedly, critical thinking skills are becoming a part of language learning, and in the past few years there have been many talks and workshops at the APPI¹⁵ Annual Conferences on this issue, so that teachers know better how to incorporate it into their teaching. From my experience critical thinking enriches our students and our lessons. Students need to learn how to think critically about the world surrounding them, evaluate information and reach an educated opinion, not simply accepting whatever is given to them as taken for granted. As said in the introduction, our society is technology-driven, where students can easily access information, and so they need to be challenged to look at things from a critical point of view. They must “ask questions, invent new ways of solving problems, connect new knowledge to the information they already have and apply their knowledge in new situations.” (Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011:8) Writing gives them the possibility to put their thoughts into words, and it also allows them time to think, which is related to that which Ghaemi & Taherian have said.

Teachers need to challenge themselves more, and their own students to think critically. This skill is often absent from classrooms where teachers focus mainly on grammar and vocabulary, and not enough on opening their students’ eyes to the world and getting them to view things from a different perspective, never taking whatever is given to them as granted. They can indeed have a fundamental role in their students’ growth, as human beings, as future citizens. Taking on Kabilan’s (2000) words, “teachers need to believe that their major roles are to think, guide, initiate, facilitate and encourage the

¹⁴ More information and resources about critical thinking can be found in <http://www.criticalthinking.org>, one of the websites recommended by the University of Oregon in their “Critical Thinking in the English as a Foreign Language Curriculum” E-course.

¹⁵ APPI stands for Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês (Portuguese English Teachers Association). Each year they organise training sessions, seminars and there is always an annual conference for teachers to meet and share their experiences, each on a different topic.
learners. This will put them in a right frame of mind and lead the learners into becoming a community of collaborative inquirers.”

According to Mayfield\(^{16}\) (2004), critical thinking can take shape both in writing and reading, and one deeply influences the other. His main purpose was to teach critical thinking through exercises in writing. Most writing will involve reflection on written texts - the thinking and research that has already been done on a given topic. The judgments and interpretations students make of the texts they read are the first steps towards formulating their own thought, and becoming “critical thinkers”. In the end, they ought to possess certain skills, such as reading critically or using writing to improve thinking and getting ideas across (Mayfield, 2004:10). Indeed,

[literary texts provide us with a widely broadened ‘other’ through which to define ourselves and our world. Reflection in our meshing with the text can foster the process of self-definition in a variety of ways. (...) The reader, reflecting on the world of the poem or play or novel can achieve a certain self-awareness, a certain perspective on his own preoccupations, his own system of values. (Rosenblatt, 1978:145-146)

It is believed that by reading and coming into contact with a variety of different types of texts, students will understand better how they should write and the topic they are expected to be writing about. Studies have indeed shown the relation between reading and writing, as they involve similar cognitive processes (Salvatori, 1983).

If there is time, teachers can also take opportunity to develop a portfolio where students will keep their work and reflect on it. This will make students become more aware of the writing processes and all the stages they go through, leading to a much more productive writing, and “when they finally look over a body of their work, judging it against a set of criteria they have developed and internalized, they are engaged in the kind of thinking characteristic of writers” (Cooper & Brown, 1992:45).

Although it is not widely covered in the CEFR, critical thinking gains importance when appearing on the scales for written production and reading comprehension, and in our own English Syllabus for the 10\(^{th}\), 11\(^{th}\) and 12\(^{th}\) grades. Students are expected to critically evaluate the texts they come across in the classroom, and at the same time they are expected

\(^{16}\) In his book, Thinking for Yourself – Developing Critical Thinking Skills Through Reading and Writing, the reader is presented with an introduction to what critical thinking is, and several activities. Its first edition came out in 1986, and was since then “polished to improve readability and facilitate learning assimilation” (2004:xxi). It was initially developed for a critical thinking composition course, and each chapter was written with Mayfield’s students’ questions and needs in mind. He later added new readings, cartoons and photographs, as well as updated social and political allusions, and introduced new composition assignments.
to be able to critically give their opinion on certain issues, be it in form of an article, essay or report. However, this same critical awareness is absent from many course books teachers come across. In this sense, there is the need to develop new activities and tasks where students are asked to think critically and challenge their own views of the world, which is central to this case study and influenced the development of this new writing syllabus. Intercultural awareness has also been an influence as learning another language can open new doors to the world and students will grow beyond their boundaries, and will add new meanings to their experience. As Guilherme argues:

[t]he effective study of foreign languages, EGL\(^{17}\)/EFL in particular, implies cultural, cross-cultural and intercultural learning. This process involves the acknowledgement not only of facts, that is, the input of geographical, historical, social or political data about English-speaking nations and cultures, but also of the complexity of hidden meanings, of underlying values, and how these articulate with the micro- and macro-contexts in which they/we exist (Guilherme, 2000, 2007)

To help teachers in the classroom, Bloom’s taxonomy\(^{18}\) is an essential element with its Higher and Lower Order Thinking Skills (HOTS or LOTS):

![Fig. 2. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy](http://tinyurl.com/3pkgw3w)

Usually, teachers tend to focus their lessons on LOTS, thus developing activities that require students to remember and understand concepts, ideas. However, most importantly, students should be given opportunities to analyse and evaluate those same concepts in order

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\(^{17}\) EGL stands for English as a Global Language.

\(^{18}\) In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and a group of colleagues identified three domains of educational activities: cognitive: mental skills (*knowledge*); affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (*attitude*); and psychomotor: manual or physical skills (*skills*). In the mid-nineties, Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom, revisited the cognitive domain in the learning taxonomy and made some change. This new taxonomy reflects a more active form of thinking and is perhaps more accurate, as shown in Figure 2.
to be able to create new solutions and make informed decisions which involve real life situations. This can be applied to writing as well.

Students’ curiosity to search for what is new can be triggered if lessons are challenging and stimulating. The right teaching materials, as shown in chapter 2, can definitely enrich lessons, as can also be seen in Guilherme’s study of the critical dimension in EFL education at upper secondary school in Portugal between 1995 and 2003. In this study teachers and students worked together to improve critical cultural awareness in the classroom, by working with engaging resources and focussing on topics which raised students’ interest. The course book was regarded as having limited texts which did not “present a critical perspective but they were rather expository and informative”, thus agreeing with my own students’ view of their course book. In this sense, new resources were brought in and explored in the classroom, reinforcing the idea that

a critical approach has to be rooted in students’ lives and background knowledge and stimulate their intellectual curiosity and emotional involvement in order to lead them to further their knowledge about alternatives found in different cultural frames. (Guilherme, 2007)

However, that in itself is not enough. Bringing in the appropriate resources is only the beginning, as teachers also need to ask the right questions as to arouse students’ interest (see Appendix 8). Only then will students be able to start their journey into becoming better critical and intercultural thinkers.

1.6. Writing within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

[Language learning is important] in the interests of greater mobility, more effective international communication combined with respect for identity and cultural diversity, more intensive personal interaction, improved working relations and a deeper mutual understanding. (Council of Europe, 2001a:5)

Within Europe, the interest in multilingualism and plurilingualism has been increasing. In 2005, the European Commission issued its first communication on “A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism” where they stated that their “long-term objective is to increase individual multilingualism until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his mother tongue” (2005:4).
According to the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, “the Council of Europe has been engaged with Europe’s language richness for a long time” and its “language education policies are aimed at the promotion of plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, democratic citizenship, mutual understanding and social cohesion.” (Lotti, 2007:3) In order to support plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe developed several tools and instruments. One of the best known is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, often referred to as the CEFR, published after a period of piloting in 2001. It set out to provide

a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. (Council of Europe, 2001a:1)

As a way of helping students, there is a self-assessment grid for the skills it considers to be the most important: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. 19 There are six reference level scales, which describe different stages of language learning, from “beginner” or “false beginner” to “highly advanced”. Nonetheless, since what might be considered a beginner in one context may be considered intermediate in another, the scale uses letters and numbers to differentiate the levels, being A1 the lowest level and C2 the highest level. These represent the typical or likely behaviour of learners by stating what they can do rather than what they cannot do. By the time students get to the 12th grade in Portugal they are expected to have reached B2 level. 20 As mine is a private school, many of my students are above average and so it is possible to work at B2 level, or even C1.

In terms of writing, in the self-assessment grid students have access to, ‘B2’ represents:

I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences. (Council of Europe, 2001a:27)

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19 So far only four skills had been mentioned when Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL): reading, writing, listening and speaking. With the CEFR, speaking was divided into two separate skills: spoken interaction and spoken production.

20 When students finish the 9th grade (age 15) they are expected to have reached B1.1. level according to the learning goals developed by the Portuguese Ministry of Education. So far nothing has been said for the 11th grade, but they are expected to be published soon according to the learning goals project still being developed.
The CEFR also provides teachers with further illustrative scales for overall written production, and subscales for creative writing, reports and essays, all of which students are required to master in the 11th grade. In the CEFR, “in written production activities the language user as writer produces a written text which is received by a readership of one or more readers.” (Council of Europe, 2001a:61) Such activities might include completing forms and questionnaires; writing articles for magazines, newspapers, newsletters; producing posters for display; writing reports, memoranda; making notes for future reference; taking down messages from dictation; creative and imaginative writing; or writing personal or business letters. The levels for the overall written production can be found in Table 1.1 (see Appendix 9). These scales are similar to the self-assessment grid mentioned above, but somewhat different. The self-assessment grids have had their language simplified, and students will understand better what their level is and the whole process behind their learning, which involves progress as well. There are also specific illustrative scales, as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, which will help teachers assess their students’ written work.

At lower levels (A1 and A2) students are expected to produce simple texts on familiar topics they encounter on a daily basis, such as describing their family, their house or their daily routine. Hopefully this means it will be easier to get them started with writing. They already have the content needed and might not have to struggle much with vocabulary and sentence structure. At higher levels (C1 and C2) students are expected to produce texts of higher complexity on a variety of concrete and abstract topics, where they are asked to give their opinion, to carry out research, challenging themselves and the reader. Although these topics are also a part of the Portuguese syllabus (eg. Bioethics), the degree of language complexity is lower as most students do not achieve proficiency level when in high school.

As far as the illustrative scale for creative writing (see Appendix 9) is concerned, it contains descriptors for all the levels. Two of these, levels A2 and B2, however, contain a subdivision which allows a greater differentiation between the writing abilities of students. According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001a:56), creative writing is important both educationally and in its own right. Written aesthetic activities may include rewriting stories, writing imaginative texts (stories, rhymes, etc.) or even the production of literary texts, such as short stories, novels or poetry, among others.

Finally, the illustrative scale for reports and essays (see Appendix 9), which I have often used in the classroom when analysing assignments, does not contain descriptors for levels A1 and A2, which indicates that students at these levels of proficiency are not expected
to be able to produce such complex text types. They might be mature enough to write on the topics given in their own language, but not master the language to be able to do so in a foreign language. Again, levels B1 and B2 have subdivisions which specify what text types students can handle and with what mastery.

Though not explicit in the CEFR, the subskills of writing are also very important and are embedded in the assessment grids. There are graphic/visual skills, which involve spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, layout and handwriting. There are also rhetorical/organisational skills and these have to do with the ability to “show logical relation between parts of a text – at sentence and paragraph level (coherence and cohesion); organise ideas into paragraphs and into text; make content accessible to the reader; communicate the message effectively and efficiently; select relevant information/ideas; reject redundant information/ideas; and select correct text type/genre”.

There are also linguistic skills and the use of creativity and imagination. As far as linguistic skills are concerned they will involve the use of appropriate lexis and grammar; the ability to use cohesive devices effectively; the selection of the suitable level of formality, register, style and appropriacy according to the audience or purpose for writing. Creativity and imagination, on the other hand, come from inspiration and being motivated to write. Hopefully, once these are mastered, students will be able to communicate effectively and persuasively, and their level of proficiency will increase.

The scales might be very helpful when teaching and assessing writing. They help teachers level the activities they have for their students, at the same time they can help them decide what level all their students are in. Even though students are expected to be at B2 once they get to the 12th grade, as has already been mentioned in this section, many students are unable to progress beyond A2 level in many Portuguese schools.

In 2009, the Council of Europe published another manual to help teachers which serves as

a continuation of the work of the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division in developing planning tools which provide reference points and common objectives as the basis for a coherent and transparent structure for effective teaching/learning and assessment relevant to the needs of learners as well as society, and that can facilitate personal mobility. (Council of Europe, 2009:16)

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21 Information withdrawn from the “Developing Writing” section in Methodology II.
In this Manual, new scales have been introduced for writing, such as overall written interaction (see Appendix 9) and processing text (see Appendix 9). These, together with the other existing scales, are there to help teachers assess their students’ work even better, and can easily be used by all teachers - ‘standardisation’ (Council of Europe, 2009:177), meaning different teachers will be looking at the same criteria and assessing students the same way, be it in Portugal or in Spain, for instance. Feedback to students is also included (qualitative and quantitative) and it does make assessing students’ work easier and more meaningful to them. They can easily understand what went wrong and what still needs to be improved. There is also a written assessment criteria grid for teachers (see Appendix 9), which might be used as a basis for assessing students’ performance. However, all these scales “should not be adopted wholesale, without a serious consideration of the goals of the class” and the purpose of the activity (Weigle, 2002:184).

The scales and the grids, developed by the ALTE Manual Special Interest Group in cooperation with the Council of Europe, can be really useful. Though currently underused, they can be of extreme value assisting teachers in and outside the classroom when marking students’ work because, as one can observe, they are clear, concise and focus on the main points teachers need to cover when assessing students’ written work.

1.6.1. Official English language syllabus for the 10th, 11th and 12th grades

The Portuguese official English language syllabus for secondary education was accredited in 2001 for all existing courses: Sciences and Technology, Arts, Economy and Humanities, and it appeared in our course books in 2003. In the introduction, it reinforces an idea already presented in the CEFR:

In the context of a plurilingual and pluricultural Europe, the access to several languages becomes more valuable for European citizens, not only as a requirement to communicate with others, but also as a fundamental basis for a civic, democratic and humane education. At school, learning languages takes on a relevant role in the whole education of students, not only in what concerns the acquisition processes of curricular knowledge, but also in the construction of an education for citizenship. (Council of Europe, 2001a:5)

22 ALTE stands for Association of Language Testers in Europe.
23 “No contexto de uma Europa plurilingue e pluricultural, o acesso a várias línguas torna-se cada vez mais valioso para os cidadãos europeus, não só como requisito para a comunicação com os outros, mas também como fundamento-base de educação cívica, democrática e humana. No contexto escolar, a aprendizagem de línguas assume, assim, um papel relevante na formação integral dos alunos, não apenas no que diz respeito aos processos de aquisição dos saberes curriculares, como também na construção de uma educação para a cidadania.” (Ministério da Educação, 2001:2).
It is clear that learning foreign languages should take centre stage within our educational system, but there is still a long way to go as foreign languages are still neglected by the system. The Portuguese syllabus was deeply influenced by the first document presented by the Council for Cultural Cooperation in 1998, *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference*, which then gave way to the CEFR. It is also based on the guidelines of the following three documents:


Some of the official English language syllabus’ main purposes are

- to secure the acquisition and systematisation of essential competences to the use of receptive and production in the English language;
- to promote an inter/multicultural, critical and active education, assuming cultural diversity as a source of individual richness;
- to stimulate an education about the *media*, by promoting the teaching of active, critical students able to analyse *media* texts and understand their production and reception processes. (Moreira et al, 2001:6)

When it comes down to its main objectives, the first one is “to develop interpreting and textual production abilities, demonstrating autonomy in the use of communication competences.” (Moreira et al, 2001:6), and so from the first day that students start to learn

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24 Not all schools have English in primary school, and even if they do parents are allowed not to choose English as an extra-curricular subject. Most schools, especially state schools, offer students only one 90-minute-lesson each week from the 5th to the 9th grade. Students in secondary school have two 90-minute lessons a week.

25 [Assegurar a aquisição e sistematização de competências essenciais ao uso receptivo e produtivo da língua inglesa; fomentar uma educação inter/multicultural crítica e participativa, assumindo-se a diversidade cultural como fonte de riqueza identitária; fomentar uma educação para os *media*, promovendo a formação de aprendentes activos e críticos capazes de analisar textos dos *media* e compreender os processos da sua produção e recepção].

26 [Desenvolver capacidades de interpretação e produção textual, demonstrando autonomia no uso das competências de comunicação.]
English this should never be undermined, and writing is indeed one of its most important aspects, as mentioned above.\(^{27}\)

As texts take an important role in our syllabus, there is an obvious need to define what they are.

The text is central to any act of linguistic communication, the external, objective link between producer and receiver, whether they are communicating face to face or at a distance. The text then functions as the input to the process of language reception. (Council of Europe, 2001a:98)

But what is a text? According to the CEFR, a ‘text’ is defined as “any piece of language, whether a spoken utterance or a piece of writing, which users/learners receive, produce or exchange. There can thus be no act of communication through language without a text” (Council of Europe, 2001a:93).

Once the main goals have been set, the syllabus addresses the content area being covered. It is divided into three main components: Text interpretation and production, sociocultural dimension and English language. Text interpretation and production is the core of the whole syllabus, according to which all teaching-learning activities are organised (Council of Europe, 2001a:8). Within this area, there are three other important ones: ‘macrofunctions’, ‘text-types’ and ‘communicative intentions’, all also covered in the CEFR. In this diagram (see Appendix 10) teachers are given a wide variety of text-types they can choose from (stories, novels, news, questionnaires, essays, among others), each within a specific macrofunction and where students can communicate in many different ways (by researching information, giving their opinion or entertaining). Many course books have these activities in them, they just lack content and authenticity as a way of motivating students (see Appendix 5), which requires teachers to sometimes be highly creative and carry on some background research as to improve the quality of their lessons, and keep their students motivated. As previously mentioned, students are expected to be exposed to a wide range of writing activities, but as many course books do not invest in these, it is our role as teachers to develop a writing syllabus which will meet our students’ needs and interests, and allow us to assess them properly.

The CEFR has undeniably provided a starting point for the development of European curricula and the description of different approaches and strategies as well as a reference point for comparing different educational systems and qualifications throughout Europe.

\(^{27}\) See page 21 for the description of a student at B2 level.
However, it is not at all prescriptive, which means its tools can be further developed by language teachers to better meet their needs, and their students’. It is the result of an established commitment to promote the learning and teaching of modern foreign languages in a multilingual and multicultural Europe and one of its strong points is that it focuses on the learner both as an individual and as a social agent.

1.6.2. The relation between the CEFR, the Portuguese syllabus, and intercultural awareness

The first time intercultural awareness is mentioned in the CEFR, there is an instant connection with the Portuguese syllabus as they advocate the same principles. In this excerpt taken from the CEFR, some of the ideas mentioned in the Introduction section of that same syllabus gain a new life. Learning a foreign language is not only learning a new way of communicating with other people; it is learning about a different culture, a different way of life, and these languages brought together change the way we look at the world around us. In its user’s guide (2001b), Trim says

[t]he learner of a second or foreign language and culture does not cease to be competent in his or her mother tongue and the associated culture. Nor is the new competence kept entirely separate from the old. The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes plurilingual and develops interculturality. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. They enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences. Learners are also enabled to mediate, through interpretation and translation, between speakers of the two languages concerned who cannot communicate directly. (Council of Europe, 2001b:23)

Kohonen (2001) claims this notion of a ‘plurilingual’ and ‘pluricultural competence’ falls into a more complex language competence on which the learner may draw. Most importantly, it takes a step further than the traditional views of communicative competence. He also clarifies that “communicative competence refers mainly to the learner’s communicative skills in different situations, whereas intercultural competence also includes personal and social abilities and attitudes.” It emphasises the importance of “the favourable development of the learner’s whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture.” (Council of Europe, 2001a:1) In this sense, it encourages the acceptance of ambiguity as well as the respect for diversity in intercultural encounters (Kohonen 2001; 2004; Kaikkonen 2001).
Undoubtedly, the aim of “intercultural communicative competence has a clear socio-political dimension in foreign language education” going beyond language skills, strategies and competences towards “fostering student autonomy, and democratic citizenship education. To promote such goals, modern language teaching should aim at developing working methods which will strengthen “independence of thought, judgment and action, combined with social skills and responsibility”” (Council of Europe, 2001a:4; Kohonen: 2002:12).

A new challenge now lies ahead of us and teachers must help students develop their sense of identity, their personality and grow beyond the boundaries of their own cultures (Beacco & Byram, 2003; Kaikkonen, 2001). Writing is one of the tools teachers can use to help their students develop this intercultural competence and their students’ critical thinking skills. Writing is indeed regularly used on a daily basis in the classroom – when students answer reading comprehension questions, solve grammar exercises or produce a longer piece of writing.

This fundamental concept within language learning - ‘intercultural competence’ - takes into account the basic principles set down in the preamble to Recommendation R (82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed;
- a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;
- it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and cooperation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination.

(Council of Europe, 2001a:2)

Kramsch, a well-known author in this area, suggests we cannot be competent in one language if we are not aware of how people in that culture think, act and relate to other people. In order to be proficient in one language, she argues cultural awareness must come hand in hand with in intercultural awareness as “[C]ulture in language teaching is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing” (Kramsch, 1993:27).

In the CEFR,
knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the ‘world of origin’ and the ‘world of the target community’ produce an intercultural awareness. It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner’s L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context. In addition to objective knowledge, intercultural awareness covers an awareness of how each community appears from the perspective of the other, often in the form of national stereotypes. (Council of Europe, 2001a:43)

This socio-cultural competence results from bringing together skills and attitudes in foreign language learning, which enable students “to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences” (Council of Europe, 2001:43). According to Byram ‘intercultural competence’ includes five main aspects:

- **Attitudes:** curiosity and openness, readiness to question our own beliefs about other cultures and our own;
- **Knowledge:** of social groups and general processes of social and individual interaction;
- **Skills of interpreting and relating:** ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own;
- **Skills of discovery and interaction:** ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction;
- **Critical cultural awareness:** ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products of our own country and other cultures and countries. (Byram, 2000)

In his article, he further explains that someone with a degree of intercultural competence

is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures - someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural. (Byram, 2000)

This definition highlights there is a close connection between his idea of intercultural competence and critical thinking, as students, in this case, will not take everything for granted and will evaluate and recreate their own views, values and beliefs.
Although Byram argues both for intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, these two notions are distinctive (Byram, 1993:16). They both involve communication with members of other cultures, but ‘intercultural competence’ refers to being able to communicate with members of other cultures in our own language, whereas the latter implies doing so in a foreign language. Kramsch, on the other hand, advocated another perspective, which “would enable learners to take both an insider’s and outsider’s view” on both cultures (Kramsch, 1993:210). In her opinion, being culturally competent does not necessarily mean behaving according to specific conventions of a particular culture, in this case, of the target community, hence it is necessary to develop cultural sensitivity and acknowledge cultural differences without assigning values to them. To this day cultural competence and performance have not been two separate concepts, and, in fact, taking over someone else’s behaviour does not guarantee that one will be accepted by those who speak the language nor that it will lead to mutual understanding.

Our students do need to see the world from a different perspective as values such as respect, empathy, justice, freedom, equality, human rights or social responsibility now have a higher degree of importance in Portuguese curricula. More than ever, these should be taken into consideration by course book writers and publishers when writing course books and developing activities. My question is to what extent is this happening? Are our new EFL course books already incorporating these new teaching values or are they only concerned about the scales and meeting the required levels according to the CEFR? Even more important, how ‘authentic’ are the materials being chosen to develop our students’ sense of identity, intercultural awareness and critical thinking, especially when it comes to writing?

The Guide for Development of Language Education Policies in Europe (Council of Europe, 2003) is the key document targeted at those who are responsible for organising language teaching in all member states. The document is supposed to provide a means to formulate language policies along the lines of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, two of the aims of the Council of Europe. Its purpose is to “serve as a reference for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in Member States (essentially in education systems)” (2003:7) and provide common principles for the development of Language Education Policy.

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28 “The teaching of culture as a component of language teaching has traditionally been caught between the striving for universality and the desire to maintain cultural particularity. By nature it grapples with the following dilemma: should it stress the commonalities or emphasise the differences between the native and the target culture? To what extent must teachers hold non-native speakers to native speakers’ conventions of language use, and to native speakers’ norms of interpretation?” (Kramsch, 1996).
Profiles drawn up for individual countries.

Within our Ministry of Education Glória Fisher, now retired, in “Políticas Linguísticas numa Europa Multilingue e Multicultural” (2004) stated Portugal has always been in touch with the guidelines given by the Council of Europe and further states these have been implemented in our educational system as well as in the national curriculum. In a way, one of the guidelines in the CEFR has been embedded in our course books. Unfortunately, the curriculum has not changed much and in terms of foreign language learning/teaching we are still far from what the Council of Europe recommended in 2002, i.e. the EU Heads of State and Government had set out a long-term objective for all EU citizens to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. According to a survey requested by the Directorate General for Education and Culture and coordinated by Directorate General Press and Communication, Portugal is still far from the top of the list. 58% of the respondents admitted not knowing any other language apart from Portuguese (2005:4), and only 54% agreed with the statement, “Everyone in the European Union should be able to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue” (Appendix 11). Apart from Portuguese, 90% of respondents believe their children should be learning English, 8% German and 7% Spanish.

Bearing in mind our educational context, not much is going to change in the near future and it becomes clear that our Ministry of Education has not yet realised that

[the benefits of knowing foreign languages are unquestionable. Language is the path to understanding other ways of living, which in turn opens up the space for intercultural tolerance. Furthermore, language skills facilitate working, studying and travelling across Europe and allow true intercultural communication. (European Commission, 2006:1)

And further that “multilingualism contributes a great deal to the key European values of democracy, equality, transparency and competitiveness.” (European Commission, 2006:3)

Despite some still existing difficulties concerning the application of the CEFR in some educational systems, it does have many benefits to offer. As stated by Lotti (2007), the CEFR “provides valuable possibilities for differentiation and a precise description of learning goals” (2007:22) and, most importantly, it is not bound to a unique method of teaching. Back in 2001, Kohonen had also emphasised “the importance of learner autonomy as a goal in modern language learning and teaching” (Kohonen, 2001:80), which is also embedded in the CEFR. According to him, it allows students to develop an attitude of “socially responsible

29 This survey took place in 2005 and the title given to its publication was Europeans and their languages (European Commission, 2006)
language learning” (Kohonen, 2001:85). At the same time, they also develop an “awareness of language and communication” which “involves a knowledge and understanding of the principles according to which languages are organised as linguistic systems and used in communication” so they can “assimilate new language experiences into their evolving linguistic framework.” (Kohonen, 2001:80)

Being learner-centred orientated, the CEFR seeks out to promote learner autonomy as one of the goals in foreign language education. According to Little, autonomy is essentially a “capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action” (Little, 1991:4), which will require students to be socially responsible in the course of their learning process. Together with learner autonomy and language awareness, plurilingual and pluricultural competence involve a “complex, multiple competence on which our students will draw whenever they come across intercultural contexts” (Kohonen, 2001:3). Through writing students will be able to separate themselves from the teacher as they become more proficient in a language, and the topics chosen will allow them to develop their critical thinking skills as well as their intercultural awareness, as suggested by Mayfield in his book. They will have time to ask themselves questions, to reflect upon what they already know about the world and what they have read or viewed, and construct their own image of what surrounds them. Writing has always been one of their main tools to shape meaning in their own language, and a foreign language gives them the possibility to give new meanings to what they already know, and enrich their world.
2.1. The educational context

This case study came to life at a private school in Lisbon, where I started teaching in September of 2009. The target group is one of five 11\textsuperscript{th} grade classes (16-year-olds) and this particular class is following the Science course. Most of the students come from upper-middle class families and their parents are well aware of the role played by English nowadays, which also means many of these students also attend private language schools which might also explain why many of them are above the stated learning goal or ‘meta de aprendizagem’ for the level (B1.2).

Here English is a compulsory language from the age of three. When in infant and primary school, each class has a 45-minute lesson per week where they learn the language with an emphasis on all the skills, obviously depending on the students’ own age. There are no formal English lessons as such but an introduction to English is carried out through activities including stories, songs and games. From the 5\textsuperscript{th} up to the 9\textsuperscript{th} grade, students have a 90-minute lesson and a 45-minute lesson per week, with a greater emphasis on the five skills. In the 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} grade, all classes have two 90-minute lessons per week, where students deepen their knowledge of the language and culture, demystifying their own, when possible.

Throughout the year, there are several cultural weeks, bringing together well-known people in the areas of sciences, arts and humanities. During each of those weeks students get involved in several workshops and conferences, which aim at promoting education, autonomy and citizenship, which are some of the objectives within the school’s educational project\textsuperscript{30} (see Appendix 12).

2.1.1. The course book – Easy Biz\textsuperscript{31}

The course book Easy Biz was adopted in 2008. It is divided into four main modules (see Appendix 13). On the whole there are eleven units in the course book and each

\textsuperscript{30} The whole document can be found at <www.colegiomoderno.pt> under Projecto Educativo.
\textsuperscript{31} See pages 13 and 14 for more information on this course book.
focuses on different sociocultural content through reading and listening, writing and speaking and language focus.

In *Easy Biz*, throughout its four modules, writing is mainly used to note down vocabulary, write down answers to reading (see Appendix 14) or listening comprehension questions (see Appendix 15) or to solve grammar exercises (see Appendix 16). Writing is used “as a means of getting the students to attend to and practise a particular language point” (Ur, 2002:162) which Harmer also refers to as “writing-for-learning”. Its strength lies in writing as both means and end. Nonetheless, there are just a small number of specific writing activities throughout the course book (see Appendix 17), which combine “purposeful reading and original writing with the learning or practice of some other skill or content” (Ur, 2002:162).

In the workbook students can find a ‘How to…’ section (see Appendix 18) with guidelines, which help them familiarise with discourse structures and the relationship between types of writing and conventions for organisation and expression. Nonetheless, there are no examples given on these types of texts, which makes it really difficult for students to start writing. There is no content to help them get started, and the way activities are drawn up are not meaningful for them.

At first sight, one might think there are a reasonable number of writing activities in each unit. However, if we take a closer look at the course book, we realise many of them are irrelevant as they do not foster writing and do not address students’ needs or motivations. They can therefore be set aside, or depending on the teacher, readjusted. Some teachers end up avoiding writing activities because there is no time to read and assess them carefully, or simply because they will not be interesting for students to write about. Nonetheless, not all students feel the same way about writing and the activities suggested, so what might be meaningful for one student might not be for another. In this sense, I have decided to adjust the year plan and focus on tasks, which are more relevant, better organised and will best suit their needs and interests throughout the year.

According to students (see Appendix 2), many times the activities included in course books are not very interesting - “the topics that we are asked to write about are always the same! Environment, technology, teenager’s problems” -, and if we look at the syllabus for all age levels it is true that the topics are always the same, though the level of difficulty

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32 These activities are many times not clearly developed and students cannot understand their relevance or what is expected from them.
33 Comments collected from the questionnaire they answered at the beginning of the school year.
increases. It is up to the teacher to analyse them from a different perspective and choose what is relevant for the students. Teachers should be looking critically at the syllabus, readjusting it to their own year plan by interpreting it, selecting relevant content and deciding on the appropriate strategies and methodologies to take on, depending on the students’ level, motivation and needs. As it is not possible to change the course book, what needs to be done is reinvent the activities we give to students, so they feel they are learning something new, something different, and at the same time working on their critical thinking skills, even if not totally aware of it.

Also worth mentioning, in Easy Biz there is never a limit of words set by the course book writers, which in my opinion gives students some autonomy when writing takes place unless the teacher provides students with a word limit. Also, in the end of each writing task students usually have the introduction to it and then “Do you need help to...? Go to the workbook, page...” These guidelines are useful in terms of organisation and format, but they do not teach students how to plan what they are going to write or give them a clear example. As Lamb (2006) points out,

before they write, getting ideas is often a huge problem for students, and while they are writing, simple things like organisation, style, register, coherence, cohesion of the text create all sorts of barriers for students if they don’t know how to put text together. (Lindsay & Knight, 2006:151)

Most likely, and taking in consideration what students have pointed out, they will end up reading the question and start writing immediately. At this point we should help them understand that writing helps them develop their critical skills as well, and therefore they should put time and effort in what they are going to write about.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. The questionnaire

At the beginning of the school year, there was a need to gather information about the students: who they were and their background (social, economic and cultural). The first lesson was therefore divided into two moments. During the first 45 minutes there was a conversation so that we could know each other better, and students were informed about their evaluation and topics being covered throughout the year. In the remaining 45 minutes, they were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which intended to get some feedback on their
attitudes to writing, and on what their expectations for the school year were, also related with writing.

The questionnaire helped me to establish the procedure to be followed throughout the school year, as some questions were my guidelines. When questioned about how they felt when asked to write a text, most students chose ‘interested’. However, right after this option was ‘bored’, which means that motivation does play a huge role in our lessons. Another important question was about the most difficult characteristics of writing for them. Eleven students mentioned ‘vocabulary’, and following this was ‘organising’, ‘thinking about arguments, points and ideas’ and ‘planning’, and this probably means students do not read much in any language, and have probably never been taught how to plan their writing. When asked about the most frequent impediment to begin a writing task, they agreed on ‘lack of ideas’ and ‘not knowing how to begin (lack of plan)’, which follows up what has already been said in chapter 2. The way to solve this problem would be ‘if the teacher chose more interesting topics’, so motivation does come up first when students are given anything to write about.

Although many students find it difficult to start writing, there is a high percentage of students who start writing immediately once they are given a topic, without having planned or organised their ideas. Two thirds of students said they ‘begin immediately – the plan is in my head’ and ‘the plan appears after I’ve started’, which is representative of what goes on in almost every classroom, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. When it comes down to error correction, which I have not focussed on in this case study, most students would like their teacher to ‘correct all grammar, vocabulary and spelling/punctuation mistakes’. However, when they are handed back their written tasks more than two thirds just look at the mark, and do not analyse their mistakes nor read the teacher’s comments. When it comes down to their reasons for writing in English, one third chose ‘to improve my writing skills’, followed by ‘to improve my knowledge in English’ and ‘to provide marks for the teacher’, leaving behind ‘to express my ideas’, which should be a top priority in any language. Finally, in the last part of the questionnaire, students were asked if they found it useful to write in class with somebody else. The answers were fairly balanced: sixteen students said they did, whereas fourteen students said they did not. By saying they did, it meant it helped produce more ideas. Just as the saying goes, “two heads think better than one”. Those who said they did not explained so by very clearly pointing out that ‘the final product is not mine’, which means there is a need for students to identify themselves with what they write.
2.2.2. Writing assignment 1: the diagnostic test

In the second lesson students were assessed on their ability to write a text. “Free writing might sometimes be done first to help establish what skills the students lacked.” (Pincas, 1982:23) Therefore, all the 11th grade students in the school had the same type of diagnostic test, regardless of the teacher or if they were a part of the study. Some classes had to write up a story having a postcard (see Appendix 19) as lead-in, whereas other classes listened to The Four Seasons by Vivaldi. This written text was then collected, marked and handed back to the students with written feedback on it. Most students came up with really interesting stories. Harmer believes “music can be a very effective way to stimulate a writing activity since it often provokes strong feelings and ideas” (2004:65). Nonetheless, in the classes where students had to listen to a piece of music, some had more difficulty in getting started and ended up writing about the song, which might mean they are not ‘musical’ and might have responded better to visual stimuli, as pictures are also a very good way for motivating students to write. The class in this case study listened to Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons. They found the activity motivating as it gave them freedom to write about anything they wanted, and it had also been different from their previous diagnostic tests. It also gave them the opportunity to put their creativity and imagination to the test (see Appendix 20 for student’s feedback).

Once I had marked and analysed the diagnostic tests, it was clear what some of the students’ difficulties were. Some lacked organisational skills, others did not have enough vocabulary to express themselves freely, and others were not really motivated by the activity at all and so ideas would not flow (see Appendix 21). Most students could cope with long texts (around 150 words), as it was something they were already used to (10th grade). The results showed three students were still at A2 level, meaning they “can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’.” Fifteen students found themselves at B1 level, which represents they “can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within (their) field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.” Eight students were already at B2 level and it means they “can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.” Finally, there were four students at C1 level, some of which were taking Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) that same year. It reveals these students “can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient
issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.” As a teacher, these results were to a certain extent surprising as in many schools, once they get to the 11th grade, there is still a long way to go before students reach B2 level, and twelve of these students had already met that goal or were even above it.

When I handed back the diagnostic tests, students were asked if they knew the CEFR. Obviously, most did not and I took the opportunity to hand them some information on it. As we were focusing on writing, I had decided to hand out the Self-assessment grid (see Appendix 22). Students realised they had their level written on their test, and it was easy for them to recognise what each of the levels represented as a whole. They had a positive attitude towards the scale, as it addressed what they could already do and it gave some of the weaker students the confidence boost they were lacking. Most students found themselves above A2 level.

2.2.3. Outcome of the questionnaire and the diagnostic test

Having now collected and analysed the results from the questionnaire, highlighting some of the concerns covered in Chapter One (see Appendix 23), and given students their first writing assignment, the diagnostic test, a set of other seven writing assignments was devised, most of them focusing on the topics to be covered throughout the year, but now shaped by theory and practice.

In the light of all which was said before, my first goal was to motivate my students by giving them authentic, interesting writing assignments, and this meant leaving many of the activities in their course book behind. Although at this time the year plan was already mapped out, there was still time to re-arrange the writing activities as to make them suit my students’ needs and interests. This gave way to a new writing syllabus, with a set of different writing activities, and all based on the 11th grade syllabus and with the same common goal: to develop students’ critical thinking and intercultural awareness through writing.

Throughout the year, the students were given eight writing assignments on the various topics being covered, some shorter and some longer. As to help them evaluate their work, they were given copies of the existing scales in the CEFR (see Appendix 9) for written production. They became less worried about the mistakes they did, and more worried about the content and the thinking process they went through to get the assignment done, as they
realised their teacher was more interested in their writing process and final result than in their mistakes.

Content, as mentioned before, was extremely valuable during this case study, as critical thinking and intercultural awareness were two of the main purposes. One must not also forget it is through writing students learn how to write (Ur, 2002:169). “One of our main tasks […] as teachers is to get out students to write a lot, thinking as they do so and learning from their own writing experience.” (Ur, 2002:169) Without words, ideas or opinions, there is no need for grammar and punctuation, as no text will be written without these.

2.3. Developing a writing syllabus for the 11th grade: procedure and rationale

Module 1: The world around us

The first module in the course book, and also in the official English language syllabus, is called “The World Around Us”. Its three units cover different topic areas, such as environmental issues, volunteer work, alternative lifestyles and bioethics. For this unit, the students are given two writing assignments.

Writing assignment 2: writing a report

Materials: Handouts prepared by the teacher

Procedure:

After having read and discussed the problems and solutions connected with very specific environmental problems (such as pollution or the human footprint), at the beginning of a 90-minute lesson, students are given a handout on how to write a report (see Appendix 24). At the top of the page there is a sample writing task and useful phrases that can be used when writing a report. They are shown a model answer, with all key points highlighted. Together, teacher and students, discuss how a report is organised, its register and if the task has been accomplished in the given example.

In the second part of the lesson, students are shown another task, but this time, in pairs, they first have to look at the notes and the questions, before moving on to the report itself. After they have all gone through the notes and the questions, they are put into groups
of five and together, by means of a collaborative task, they have to look at a student’s final report and rewrite it. There are spelling mistakes, missing information, no introduction nor conclusion, and an inadequate layout has been used. They can spend up to 30 minutes working on this report.

On the next lesson, in the first 45 minutes, students are asked to write a report for the director34 at their school giving her some advice on how to make the school more eco-friendly. They do this individually and are given a week to hand in the final report.

Rationale:

Although writing a report is included in the 11th grade syllabus, it is not included in the course book adopted by the school. The decision to include one at this point had to do with the topic being covered, and the lack of knowledge most students have about their own school and environmental policies.

Most students had only come across reports in Physics & Chemistry class, but these had a different layout and purpose. Therefore, influenced by Pincas’ approach, students were presented with the model of a report and key vocabulary. Ur also highlighted this idea as “[r]eading (…) helps, since it familiarises learners with the conventions governing various kinds of texts and in general improves their language” (Ur, 2002:169). It also boosted their confidence for the next stage, where they had to read and assess the report written by another student, again reinforcing their background knowledge on how to write a report. By giving them questions to answer, students were guided through that same analysis and it became easier for them to spot its weaknesses. By doing this in groups of five, students had the opportunity to communicate and listen carefully to each other, share their opinions and help each other. “Collaborative writing presents not only a highly motivating learning experience for EFL/ESL students but also a creative pedagogical tool for teachers. […] When students work together on a writing assignment, they learn from each other and edit each other’s mistakes.” (Montero, 2005:36) What is equally important is the creation, in the classroom, of a desirable atmosphere which will lead to the development, confrontation and clarification of ideas between students themselves (Martins & Araújo e Sá, 2003:110), and not as usual between the teacher and the students which makes the whole activity much more enjoyable and enriching for them, particularly when they have different feelings and reactions towards

34 It can also be the headmaster, principal or someone else who can make decisions.
what was written. They learn how to work and interact within a group, but it also gives them the independence and autonomy needed to uphold their points of view.

By having students write an individual report, they got involved in their school’s project. Moreover, the school would be taking part in the project Eco-Escolas, an international programme, whose aim is to encourage action and recognise the quality of work developed at school, within Environmental Education, and they were able to give their own opinion about measures that could be taken as to make their school even better.35 Students felt they were taking on an important role, especially because any of their measures could be put in practice (see Appendix 25 for a sample report and Appendix 20 for student feedback). It was an authentic task which gave them some autonomy as they had to research and come up with their own ideas.

**Writing assignment 3: writing an argumentative essay**

Materials: course book; extract and film from “My Sister’s Keeper” by Jodi Picoult; Jodi Picoult’s website

Procedure:

Students read a few texts from their course book on bioethics and related issues. As a class they name some of the most controversial issues related with Bioethics and the teacher writes them on the board. “Designer babies” will be one of the choices, and so the teacher gives students an extract from the novel “My Sister’s Keeper” by Jodi Picoult (see Appendix 25).

The extract will be the lead-in to a debate in the classroom on whether parents should have a second child to save another one, and if they should use that second child as a means to an end, saving the first born. In the end, some key ideas are written on the board. The author’s website with a short synopsis on the story and an interview36 might be quite valuable too.

In the next 90-minute lesson, students watch the film “My Sister’s Keeper” (2009).

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35 Most students really enjoyed writing the report, especially because the director read them, not only their teacher. Hopefully in the future some of their measures might be implemented, and visible to students’ eyes. Also, by the end of it, most students could recognise the layout of a report, what the register should be and that they needed to previously plan what they were going to write as not to be repetitive or unclear.

36 For a good introduction to this topic, see <http://www.jodipicoult.com/my-sisters-keeper.html>.
As a way of bringing the discussion stage and the film together, students are later asked to read a quote by the author herself, and give their opinion on this issue. They have to write an argumentative essay for homework. To help them there is a discussion on how argumentative essays are written, first in Portuguese, and then in English, as there are a few slight differences, though the layout and register is the same.

Rationale:

The reason behind the choice of book/film is related with personal interest shown by students, which is central in this case study. Some of them had read the book in Portuguese, and so the decision to work with it came from them when ethics was being discussed. This would certainly be a book which would motivate and engage students in the classroom, as they can gain insight into literature by gaining entrance to a world familiar or unfamiliar to them due to the cultural aspects of stories, and taking a voyage from the literary text to their own minds to find meanings for ideas, leading to critical thinking. (Erkaya, 2005)

During the debate phase, through the use of brainstorming, some of the most important aspects related with ethics were written on the board, giving all students something to write later on. Brainstorming or mind maps must not be applied to all activities, but for some students it is quite a helpful pre-writing activity, as Senior clarifies.

Language teachers often require their students to brainstorm what they collectively know, first in small groups, and then as a whole class, with the teacher or individuals writing words on the board. This task is effective pedagogically because it establishes prior student knowledge (thus avoiding teaching what some students may already know). It is also effective socially, since it validates prior student knowledge, and may even boost the self-esteem of class members who are unexpectedly able to contribute to the collective knowledge of the class group (Senior, 2002:399)

Most students felt at ease and participated in the classroom debate, and I also took the opportunity to ask some shyer students for their opinion. Some of those students felt like giving their opinion as they had read the book or seen the film. What was interesting as well,
was seeing them bring into our lesson concepts they had studied in Philosophy and which helped them come to a conclusion of their own.

Taking in consideration Bloom’s taxonomy (see page 19), students first had to remember what they knew about this particular story, and any similar cases they had heard of, and afterwards there was a need to reflect upon those and interpret them. Then, they were asked to use the knowledge acquired during the debate phase and apply it, by developing new approaches to the problem presented in the book/film – if having a designer baby was not the adequate solution, what other solutions might there be? There was a need to analyse the extract from the book carefully as a lot of information on the main character is then shared with the reader, before jumping into the film.

This final writing assignment helped meeting one of the goals in this case study, which is to develop students’ critical thinking skills, as they were in the end asked to evaluate what had happened, and how, and to create new meanings by sharing their opinion with each other and discussing the ethics behind it. Stem cell research and “designer babies” are a controversial issue, and their final conclusions were really productive and interesting to read. Students enjoyed this writing assignment and found it motivating, as it was really an interesting issue and many had not made up their minds yet. This topic got them to critically think about what ethics represents, especially when many of them are to become doctors and researchers in the future. It was relevant to them, and authentic as well. As one student says, “it is a strong topic” and they “had to deal with [their] own feelings” (see Appendix 27 for a sample essay and Appendix 20 for student feedback).

**Module 2: Teens World**

In the second term, one of the units being covered was “Teens World”, usually a topic teens themselves do not like much. One of their favourite units, though, is related with the media and the advertising industry and how they affect their lives on a daily basis.

**Writing assignment 4: writing an article**

Materials: ads and articles taken from the Internet and newspapers
Procedure:

In class, students thoroughly analyse some very controversial ads, taking special notice of how women, and men, are exploited in the media, by the media. A few notes are written on the board so they can keep record of what each of them says. In the next lesson, they are given an article by Jean Kilbourne on “Beauty and Body Image in the Media”, and later a poem by Benjamin Zephaniah called “Miss World” (see Appendix 28). Both texts are analysed taking in consideration the previous lesson, and the conclusions they had come up with.

For homework, students are asked to write an article for a teens’ magazine on the role of the media nowadays. In the next lesson, students bring in their articles and in the first fifteen minutes of the lesson share with each other what each of them wrote, adding any important remarks they think are relevant and which might improve their colleagues’ work. The final article is then handed in to the teacher.

Rationale:

Students had the opportunity to critically analyse ads (on paper and TV ads) they see every day (‘authenticity’) but had never questioned before. It was interesting to see as the lesson progressed how they reacted to those same ads, once we looked at the techniques, target consumer group and focussed on what each ad represented to them, as teenagers. The choice of some of the ads (see Appendix 29) fell on being aimed at their age group or interests, and so they knew some of them.

There was also a focus on how beauty and body image are exploited by the media, again using resources they found interesting and sometimes challenging (see Appendix 30). The more ads they analysed, the more autonomous at analysing them they became, meaning that at some point the teacher was only there to guide them.

All the discussion stage gave students the lead-in for their articles, and it was interesting to see how they could relate back to what had been discussed in the classroom. Again, critical thinking was central to this activity, and Bloom’s Taxonomy is always very helpful by helping teachers ask the right questions. Intercultural awareness was also brought in when discussing women’s roles in advertising, as in some western countries women do not

39 Most students look at advertising and never really think about its hidden agenda. For these two lessons, first the emphasis was on ads taken from TV and magazines
suffer from the same exposure. Students felt they were given the opportunity to “develop [their] writing skills” and that “the ads […] analysed in class helped [them] to critically look beyond what they usually represent”. They also enjoyed “writing for someone [their] age and reading what [their] friends [had written]” (see Appendix 31 for sample article and Appendix 20 for student feedback). In this assignment the process approach was used, and they had the opportunity to plan, write, read and revise their own work, and edit it, if they wished, after their colleagues had read it. The teacher is not the only one reading the article which makes the whole activity more engaging for the whole class.

**Module 3: The World of Work**

During the second term, a new unit was introduced, “The World of Work”. It started off with modern working routines, and then moved on to the last unit “Young people and work”. There are always some interesting articles, with real life experiences told by people from all over the globe, and students enjoy listening to them. More aimed at their age, there was also a discussion about ‘gap year’ and how relevant it was, or not, in our own country. This got them to think about their own future, their hopes and dreams, their expectations, and also about their own country’s situation (social, political and economic).

**Writing assignment 5: writing a paragraph**


**Procedure:**

Students are shown the documentary “Inside Job”, which deals with the economic crisis which started in the US, changing the lives of many people.

Students are asked to think about their country and measures that might be implemented in order to overcome a specific situation, in this case, the economic crisis which also affected Portugal. They are to write a sentence or a paragraph stating one measure that could be passed on in Parliament and which would help the country. They are given a slip of paper where they can write their measure.
Afterwards, each student hands in his/her piece of paper and the teacher reads each of their measures aloud. Each student is allowed to comment on the measure being read, even the student who wrote it down, if he/she does not mind being identified. This might lead to an interesting classroom debate.

Rationale:

The documentary “Inside Job” (2010) is an excellent resource to use in the classroom, especially now that politics and the economic situation of the world have taken centre stage in everybody’s lives. Although students might have a certain difficulty understanding some of the concepts related with economy (which does not constitute a problem; it is added value as students learn new vocabulary in a real life context presented by the film), they will not have any problems coming to terms with its global meaning – the financial meltdown which started back in 2000, bringing us to where we are today, with many countries facing serious economic difficulties.

As students were asked to write down a measure to deal with the crisis, this was perhaps one of the most challenging activities for them. At the beginning, a student said she was too young to have a mind of her own on something like this. Having said this, some of her colleagues said it was impossible for her not to have an opinion and started talking about what was going on in Portugal. Many of them watched or read the news daily and so they were really up-to-date with current affairs.

As many students in this class enjoyed talking about politics, and some even belonged to the main parties in Portugal, this was an excellent opportunity to listen to their points of view on the current state of affairs. Portugal is going through hard times and as teenagers are said to be the future of the nation, why not listen to their queries and demands? This links back to one of my aims as a teacher, as this activity fosters both critical thinking and learner autonomy (see Appendix 32 for some students’ ideas and Appendix 20 for student feedback).

Module 4: A Multicultural World

Writing assignment 6: writing a summary

Materials: course book
Procedure:

Students read four short texts on multiculturalism taken from the BBC website\(^{40}\). After reading each text, the teacher asks students to pinpoint the main ideas presented by each of the people interviewed and writes them on the board. The teacher tells the students they are going to write a summary, using those same ideas, and discusses with the students the purpose behind writing a summary, and what its key features are, such as being much shorter than the original and expressing the author’s views.

The students are then requested to write down a summary of the four texts, either individually or in pairs. The students are given fifteen minutes, at the end of which they are to hand in their summaries.

Rationale:

This short writing activity was a way for them to keep a record of what had been said in class about multiculturalism. Summaries are very useful as students engage in what they have read and keep a condensed record of it in their own words. Together with note-taking, it is a skill they ought to master and they will need it at a higher academic level (such as at University). It also helps them towards autonomy.

All students read the same texts, and they would all be writing a similar summary. This means it would also be easier for them to check with their colleagues if they were on the right track, and what needed to be changed. Again, pair or collaborative work was an option students could choose from, especially weaker ones. Most students could cope with the activity. However, some had some difficulty in detaching themselves from the text and keeping within the word limit (see Appendix 33).

This module also allows students to focus more on specific issues related with intercultural awareness, and all the four texts proved themselves to be highly appealing, and led to a positive, healthy discussion in the classroom. “Knowledge of the shared values and beliefs held by social groups in other countries and regions, such as religious beliefs, taboos, assumed common history, etc., are essential to intercultural communication.” (Council of Europe, 2001:11)

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\(^{40}\) These texts can be found in their course book (pages 201 and 202) and also on BBC’s website - http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3600791.stm
Writing assignment 7: writing an essay

Materials: short story “Names” by Maya Angelou

Procedure:

Students read the short story “Names” outside class. On a given date, the teacher asks students to bring in the story. There is a first contact with the author and her biography, and the time and place of the story are also contextualised. Students might help if they remember their History lessons.

The short story is read out, focussing on all the little details, which make it so unique. In the end, students are given some reading comprehension questions, and a longer piece of writing relating the story with the unit - “A multicultural world”. After the reading comprehension questions are corrected, students are given 30 to 45 minutes to write their essays.

Rationale:

Getting students to contact with real literature, among other reasons, was the purpose behind choosing “Names”, and not the short story sent by the publisher of the course book. With this story the emphasis was particularly on intercultural awareness, as the world revealed in the story is different from the one these students live in. They had general knowledge acquired in their History lessons, but there were many details about this society in particular they did not know. So, to begin with, there was an introduction to American history and culture, which students found really engaging. Some of the questions behind Bloom’s taxonomy also proved themselves to be useful at this stage, and helped me analyse the background to this story.

Students did not know the writer nor the story, and it was quite fascinating to see how they got involved in all the events taking place, saying how they would themselves react in particular situations if they were her. The language was not familiar and the context was also

41 In class, students might watch a documentary on Maya Angelou and the teacher might also show them her website.
42 The short story chosen by the authors of this book, The Spirit of Christmas, would by no means have the same effect. It might be interesting, but not for these teenagers who are always demanding more from the syllabus and more challenging content. When shown this short story at the beginning of the year, students asked if another one could be chosen. Among the options given, “Names” was the one they chose.
very different from the one they contact with every day. Still, it was impossible for most of them not to sympathise with Marguerite when she was a ten-year-old girl. Indeed,

reading [a] text is an active event; it necessarily entails the bringing of prior knowledge to bear upon what is read. Readers use this knowledge to enter into a transaction with the text that makes the resulting understanding and interpreting individual and unique.(Reid, 1993:15-16)

The individual writing activity was developed as a way of bringing the whole module together, and assessing to what extent students had read and understood the story and could make the right connections with the module being covered43, also because their end-of-the-year test was getting closer, and this was one of the areas they would be formally assessed on. There was no particular emphasis on any of the writing approaches mentioned earlier on in Chapter 1 as students were given freedom to write the way they preferred. Some still feel the need to have everything planned, whereas other have ‘the plan in their head’. They considered this activity “absolutely engaging” and it also gave them an insight into how people lived back then (see Appendix 34 for a student’s essay and Appendix 20 for student feedback).

Writing assignment 8: opinion paragraph on a film

Procedure:

As a follow-up activity, after several lessons where multiculturalism has been thoroughly discussed, students watch the short film, La Fune. As they watch the film, the teacher stops at key moments and asks for students’ feedback on what is and will be happening. In the end they are asked to write down their opinion on the film. They are given no word limit.

The teacher asks some students to read what they have written, and together as a class they discuss the main ideas behind the story, and in what way it is related with multiculturalism.

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43 Reading influenced students’ writing and it gave them the content required to fullfill the activity. Again, students developed their critical thinking skills and intercultural awareness by contacting with a reality which is very different from their own.
Rationale:

*La Fune, or The Rope*[^44^], won the first international short film contest on the theme of Intercultural Dialogue in 2004. Again, students were confronted with a reality much different from theirs, where two women living next to each other could not find a way to communicate. There was a deep analysis of the film, stopping at key moments, where students had the opportunity to explore the situations and put themselves in the place of the two children in the film, and two women. When these two worlds find a connection, students come to realise its message.

It is only through dialogue, the coming together of different peoples, encounters and mutual understanding that it is possible to combat prejudice and a lack of openness to diversity. And it is only by breaking down the barriers of ignorance that it is possible to open one’s mind and take an interest in others, recognise the need for knowledge and mutual enrichment nourished by exchanges.[^45]

This short film is remarkable, and the story really engages students. The music unsettles them, and takes them to a different place. The two children who learn how to communicate with each other, unlike the two adult women, also catch their attention and students smile every time a drawing is sent to the other side of the rope. It can be used to wrap up the module, and in this case, the school year. There is more uniting us, than dividing us, and this is one of my goals as an English teacher. Taking advantage of learning a foreign language as a way of helping my students grow outside their own world, and boundaries, which links back to Kayman’s vision (see page 14), where meeting ‘the other’ is unsettling, but rewarding.

In this short film, students are confronted with two different realities and two different ways of dealing with that same reality. They make judgements about what they see, and they reflect on how they would react had they been in that same situation. The ‘other’ becomes more familiar as they try to understand why both women acted in such a way[^46^] (see Appendix 35 for a student’s text and Appendix 20 for student feedback).

[^44^]: *The Rope* is a “metaphoric tale, centred about a rope which connected two balconies overlooked the same road. The rope is used by two women, one Arab and the other one Italian, to hang out the washing. Sharing is not easy however. Entering the rope turns into a challenge and the relationship between the two becomes stormy and grotesque at time. In the meantime their respective children, an eight-year-old boy and a seven-year-old girl, learn to know each other just through the rope exchanging their drawings.” (In [http://www.euromedcafe.org/lwinner.asp?lang=ing&documentID=244](http://www.euromedcafe.org/lwinner.asp?lang=ing&documentID=244))


[^46^]: Intercultural awareness is the key focus, although one might say critical thinking is also essential in understanding these two different worlds and how these two women deal with each other.
| Conclusion

Theoretical and Pedagogical implications

Developing a new writing syllabus for the 11th grade has proven itself to be a rewarding challenge, and students have benefitted deeply from these eight devised activities. First and foremost, they have improved their writing skills, as up to this moment is was not one of the most practiced skills, especially in terms of advanced writing. They have also developed their critical thinking skills and intercultural awareness, as these activities made them more aware of certain issues happening around them, some more visible than others, and thinking has opened up a whole new world for them. And, finally, they have also become more autonomous as experience has shown them they can cope with longer writing tasks on their own. The teacher is only there to light the way in the beginning.

The diagnostic test at the beginning of the school year has proven to me that it is the best way to assess and evaluate students’ knowledge of the language. Common English written tests taken in Portuguese schools or multiple choice questions tell us little about how students deal with the language, on their own. Be it through music or a postcard/image, these two ways have allowed my students to test their creativity, and they quickly accepted and understood the reasons behind this testing tool. Therefore, I will not go back to the test I used to give my students, as I have found writing to be much more interesting and dynamic than any other assessment measure previously used. It reveals how well they can organise their ideas, what their level of vocabulary is and it gives them the freedom to express themselves any way they want.

When it comes down to assessing the written activities/tasks, this is where I come across most of my difficulties. Not because it is difficult to mark what students have written, but because time itself is short to mark all the written assignments throughout the year, plan lessons, deal with the unexpected and teach.

Due to time constraints, I had little time, or no time at all, to focus on error correction in the classroom. I wish I could have done more, as my students would have benefitted from it, especially because they learn by analysing their mistakes. Also there was not enough time for collaborative work, which would have allowed students to move towards better self-expression. Through discussing their ideas with peers,

47 During the collaborative writing task (rewriting the report), students had the opportunity to work together. Working in groups and later in pairs, revising their mistakes and getting feedback from each other has proven to be an excellent teaching and learning tool.
brainstorming, using questioning techniques, drafting and editing their own and support each other in deciding exactly what to write and the best way of writing it.” (Parrington, 2005:28)

Hopefully, in the future, time and classroom management will be better and students will have more opportunities to be working in pairs and in groups. It is not only the final result which matters, but also the process of writing, reading, editing and writing again which helps them learn as a group, and become better writers themselves.

The benefits drawn from this case study were immense, and it was really fulfilling to get to the end of another school year and realise that students have enjoyed the topics covered, and even more important, have enjoyed writing about them. For the first time in a long time, in their self-assessment (see Appendix 36), students valued the activities chosen, particularly when they addressed worries they themselves had. They found the films, pictures and articles interesting and motivating, which then helped them to overcome their fear of writing, and boredom. Many of them now felt enthusiastic about writing, and felt this syllabus had made a difference in their learning.

Very shortly, and coming back to my initial research questions, I do believe students were motivated to write and the resources used got them to think critically and develop their intercultural awareness, to ‘speak’ their minds and writing just made the whole process easier as it gave them time to think. Moving away from the course book gave us the opportunity to encounter different texts, to experience different activities and to make them more real and authentic in their eyes. They also improved their writing, as they were no longer afraid to write and took on the challenge given to them at the beginning of the school year. They now know how to organise their ideas better, some of them already plan what they are going to write about and they started looking at their mistakes from a different perspective, as it no longer prevented them from writing. They now look at them and try not to repeat them in the future, whereas before many of them did not even look at them.

There is still a long way to go, and much needs to change so that writing takes its place in our classroom. There is indeed a need to find time for it, and our students will be the ones benefiting from this. If they feel we are involved, that we care and want them to succeed, “many flowers bloom” (Rosen, 1985:251) and writing will find its rightful place in our lessons. Nothing can replace the power of the written word as it stays forever, and this writing syllabus was an opportunity to get the most from students’ learning.

48 Classroom and peer discussion were the given feedback after many of the writing activities being carried out.
Today we have a great challenge ahead of us and more than ever our students need opportunities to show what they can do with the language inside and outside the classroom. Writing tasks which are embedded in our curriculum and classroom practice must be created, and we should provide students with meaningful feedback on their performance, written or spoken, at all times. Students are the reason we, teachers, exist.

More than ever, it is obvious that our students are more successful when they are motivated by authentic reasons to use language and which can influence their lives outside the classroom. The course book is a tool that will help us along the way. However, as shown in this case study, course books are not always ready for the taking and we have to adapt what they offer to our students’ needs and interests, and create new ones whenever possible, as was the case.

This is the reason why we must seriously think about the activities and tasks we choose to bring into our classrooms. There must be a reason behind each of them and students have to understand why each of the skills they are taught is relevant to their learning and to their future. English opens the doors to the world.
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| Other Resources: |


Available from <http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/Elp_tt/Results/DM_layout/00_10/06/06%20Supplementary%20text.pdf> [last accessed 27th July 2011].


Ministério da Educação (2010): Metas de Aprendizagem para o 3º CEB – LEI.


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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire about students’ attitudes towards writing

Name:_________________________ Class:______

Questionnaire

“Just as there are non-swimmers, poor swimmers, and excellent swimmers, so it is for writers. Why isn’t everyone an excellent writer? What is it about writing that blocks many people, even in their own native language? Why don’t people learn to write «naturally», as they learn to talk? How can we best teach second language learners of English how to write?” (Brown, 2001: 334)

1. How do you feel about writing? Do you think it is ... (circle one option)
   a. a very important skill?
   b. as important as all the other skills (reading, speaking and listening?
   c. not so important as speaking?
   d. not important at all?
   e. Other (please specify): ______________

2. How do you usually feel when you are asked to write a text? (circle one option)
   a. Interested
   b. Enthusiastic
   c. Incapable
   d. Bored
   e. Other (please specify): ______________

3. Written homework is ... (circle all/any options that are true for you)
   a. an important part of my assessment
   b. frequently done with someone else
   c. is a useful way of practising English
   d. a waste of time
   e. Other (please specify): ______________

4. What are the most difficult characteristics of writing for you? (List in order of importance)
   a. Remembering grammar
   b. Remembering vocabulary
   c. Organising ___
   d. Thinking of arguments, points and ideas ___
   e. Planning ___
   f. Spelling ___
   g. Other (please specify): _________________________
5. What is the most frequent impediment to beginning a writing task? (List in order of importance)
   a. The topic ___
   b. Lack of ideas ___
   c. Time ___
   d. Fear of making mistakes ___
   e. Not knowing how to begin (lack of plan) ___
   f. Other (please specify): __________________  ___

6. What would help you improve this situation? (List in order of importance)
   a. If I was allowed to be more creative ___
   b. If the teacher gave me more help with organisation and planning ___
   c. If the teacher gave me more help with vocabulary ___
   d. If the teacher gave me more help with grammar ___
   e. If the teacher chose more interesting topics ___
   f. Other (please specify): __________________  ___

7. When writing a formal composition, your most important concern should be... (circle one option)
   a. The structure of the composition
   b. The ideas expressed
   c. The accuracy in English
   d. Use of the appropriate register
   e. Other (please specify): ________________

8. When you write your composition: (circle one option)
   a. I always write a clear plan first.
   b. I begin immediately – the plan is in my head
   c. The plan appears after I have started
   d. A plan is not necessary
   e. You don’t have time to make a plan
   f. Other (please specify): ________________

9. How should teachers correct your writing? (circle one option)
   a. Just correct the grammar mistakes
   b. Correct all grammar, vocabulary and spelling/punctuation mistakes
   c. Just correct the organisational mistakes
   d. The teacher should try to write a ‘good’ version of what I was trying to say
   e. Other (please specify): ________________
10. What is the first thing you do when you receive your work from the teacher? (circle one option)
   a. Look at the mark
   b. Feel demoralised by the amount of corrections
   c. Read the teacher’s comments
   d. Analyse my mistakes
   e. Other (please specify): __________________

11. What do you do with the corrected version of your written work? (circle one option)
   a. File it
   b. Try to correct the mistakes identified
   c. List and classify the mistakes to avoid repetition
   d. Ask my teacher to explain
   e. please specify): __________________

12. List in order of frequency your main reason for writing in Portuguese:
   a. For pleasure
   b. Necessity e.g. leaving notes or texting
   c. As part of my studies
   d. I rarely write anything
   e. Other (please specify):____________________

13. List in order of importance your reasons for writing in English:
   a. To provide marks for the teacher
   b. To improve my knowledge of English
   c. To improve my writing skills in English
   d. To practise something I have already learnt
   e. To express ideas
   f. Other (please specify):____________________

14. Do you think it is useful to write in class with somebody else, i.e. in pairs or small groups? (circle one option)
   
   If YES, why?
   a. If helps me clarify my own thoughts
   b. The final product is better
   c. It produces more ideas
   d. Other (please specify):____________________

   If NO, why?
   a. If prevents me from clearly expressing my own thoughts
   b. The final product is not mine
   c. The other student(s) dominate the activity
   d. Other (please specify):____________________

15. How do you see writing? (circle one option)
   a. As a difficult but necessary task
   b. As a way of creating homework
c. As a creative process
d. As a means of communication
e. Other (please specify): ____________________

16. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about writing in English? You can answer this question in Portuguese, if you wish.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Adapted from *Motivating Students to Write* by John Elliott

Thank you for your time! 😊

Your English teacher,

Helena Oliveira

Master’s student
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
*Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas*
*Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*
Appendix 2 – Students’ opinions taken from the questionnaire

16. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about writing in English? You can answer this question in Portuguese, if you wish.

In my opinion writing in English should be in a way that students actually feel motivated to write about a certain topic rather than doing it in order to have good marks.

I just want to make clear that when we are writing a composition, the reason why sometimes it seems a piece of craft it’s because always, but always, the topic that we asked to write it is the same, always the same! Environment, Technology, Teenagers’ problems; English as the world’s official language.
### Appendix 3 – Writing in the classroom

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Copying</strong></td>
<td>Students practise forming letter shapes in a handwriting book,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>note down substitution tables from the board, copy examples</td>
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<td>from a textbook, etc.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Doing exercises</strong></td>
<td>Students write single word phrases, sentences, etc. in response</td>
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<td>to very tightly focused tasks with limited options and limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>opportunities for creativity or getting things wrong.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Guided writing</strong></td>
<td>You guide students to write longer texts in quite restricted or</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>controlled tasks by offering samples, models, possibly useful</td>
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<td>language items, advice, organisational frameworks, etc.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Process writing</strong></td>
<td>Students write what they want to, with help, encouragement</td>
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<td>and feedback from you and others throughout the process of</td>
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<td>choosing a topic, gathering ideas, organising thoughts, drafting,</td>
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<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Unguided writing</strong></td>
<td>Students write freely without overt guidance, assistance or</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>feedback during the writing process, though a title or task may</td>
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<td>be set, and work may be ‘marked’ later.</td>
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Scrivener, 2005:193
Appendix 4 – *My Sister’s Keeper*: discussion prompts

*My Sister's Keeper*              Designer Babies - Organ Donation

A. Read the definition of designer babies provided by Wikipedia:

The colloquial term "designer baby" refers to a baby whose genetic makeup has been artificially selected by genetic engineering, combined with in vitro fertilisation to ensure the presence or absence of particular genes or characteristics. The term is derived by comparison with "designer clothing". It implies the ultimate commodification of children and is therefore usually used pejoratively to signal opposition to such use of reprogenetics. ‘Designer babies’ is a term used by journalists to describe it; it is not a term used by scientists. (Wikipedia)

B. Decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements below about designer babies. Write P if you think the information is a Pro or C if you think it is a Con. Justify your answers.

( ) Babies Genetic screening can reduce the baby's chances of being born with several serious diseases like Down Syndrome, Famial hypercholesterolemia, rare blood disorders such as Diamond Blackfan Anaemia, etc.

( ) This technique is not limited to screening for genetic and hereditary disorders, but is also used for cosmetic reasons.

C. Do you agree with the statements below? Justify your choices: Write A if you agree and D if you disagree.

( ) Adolf Hitler was on a quest to create a race of Aryan Blond, blue eyed and tall people. Creating designer babies is believed to be on the same lines. The question arises, which skin colour and physical features are to be chosen.

( ) The advent of designer babies will affect biodiversity. Moreover, traits decided by parents, eliminates the say of the child in his or her life.

( ) Parents passionate about sports would have the athletic ability engineered into the child. However, the child may not want the same. This reduces the child's freedom to choose.

( ) If accepted, it will have a negative impact on society. It will result in increase of unreasonable fear or hatred towards foreigners or anyone who appears different.

( ) People with genetic defects will be socially rejected. They will be called 'gene poor' and will be separated from the society too.

( ) Today, people who have genetic defects are already treated differently and cast out from society in several parts across the world. Designer babies concept, will lead to discrimination on the basis of certain qualities or traits.
Kids of rich families will receive genetic enhancement, leading to genetic aristocracy. This gives them an unfair advantage over the other children. People unable to afford genetic engineering will be looked down upon. Thereby, creating a greater rift in society.

Most parts of the world are still male dominated, and sex or gender determination of the baby can lead to gender discrimination across the globe.

Life will definitely be better for people will live longer and with fewer diseases.

I would have a child genetically engineered if I had another child in need of a compatible organ to transplant for its survival.

I would make my designer baby donate its organ to save another child of mine even if it did not want to donate it.


D. As you watch the film My Sister's Keeper, answer the questions that follow.
1. What's the main character's opinion about how most babies are generated?
2. What's her opinion about the way she was generated?
3. Why was she engineered?
4. What has changed since her sister got sick?
5. How would you describe the family's relationship?

E. Watch the second movie segment from the movie My Sister's Keeper and discuss the questions that follow in pairs.
1. What does the main character want to do?
2. Why does she want to do that?
3. What's the lawyer's opinion about it?
4. What has she gone through since she was born?
5. What are the possible consequences of her decision?
6. What's your opinion about her decision? Is she right or wrong? Explain your answer.
7. Does she have the right to do it? Why (not)?
8. What would you do if that girl were your own daughter, refusing to donate her kidney to save your other daughter?

F. Now watch the final segment from the same movie and discuss the questions:
1. What are the girl's arguments for not donating her kidney?
2. What is their family reaction?
3. Is she right to say what she did? Explain it.
4. What about her parents? Are they right to demand the donation?
5. What's your opinion about the situation?

Appendix 5 – Writing a letter of complaint

Letter of Complaint 1

Peter Lusthred
67 Paradise Street
Liverpool L12 8WJ

The 12th of November 2007

Dear Sir / Madam,

On the 23rd of September, I bought a ___ sofa from Coach World in Chapel Street, Liverpool, for £___2____I have discovered it is ___3____.

The problems are:

• the ___4____ of the sofa is loose;
• ___5____ are sticking out at the side;
• one of the ___6____ has flattened.

I 7______about this to them on the 15th of October and ___8____ of October, I have heard nothing since.

I wish to return the goods and claim a ___9____ / refund from you.

Please respond to my ___10____ within seven days.

Letter of Complaint 2

Mary Bleach
6 Princess Street 8
Manchester M21

The 21th of January 2006

The Manager
Wonder Building
Portland Street 8
Manchester M38

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to complain about the poor standard of ___1____ I received in relation to the construction of a ___2____. As evidence of this I ___3____ a list of problems. The work was clearly not carried out with ___4____ care and skill and, as such, amounts to ___5____ of contract.

Unless and until these matters are ___6____, I shall be withholding the ___7____ of the contract price. Furthermore, if you do not put ___8____ right within two weeks (or such other period as we may agree) I shall get another ___9____ to redo it.

I will obtain a few ___10____ from reputable contractors and if the cost of the cheapest ___11____ the balance of the contract price, I shall claim the ___12____ from you by way of damages.

I look forward to your early reply.

Yours sincerely,
Mary Bleach
B. Look at Letter of Complaint 1 and match the following headings to the corresponding part of the letter:

1. sender’s name and address  7. closing remark
2. date  8. identification of problems
3. salutation  9. greeting
4. reason for writing  10. previous contacts
5. signature  11. final claim
6. recipient’s name/address

C. Reread both letters and say if the following statements are true or false. Find evidence in the text to justify your answers.

Letter of Complaint 1:
1. Peter Ludured is writing to the retailer who sold him a sofa.
2. He has complained directly about his problem.
3. The purchaser wants a new sofa.
4. Peter Ludured has given the manager one week to solve his problem.

Letter of Complaint 2:
1. Mary Bleach is satisfied with the quality of the work carried out by the contractor.
2. She considers the contractor has clearly failed to carry out the work they agreed previously.
3. Nevertheless, she will pay for the work.
4. Mary Bleach establishes a deadline for the contractor to repair the listed problems.
5. She will hire another contractor if Wonder Building does not put things right.
6. If she contracts another builder, she will pay for the new service again.

FOLLOW-UP

Read the situation below and write a letter of complaint.

Name of the dissatisfied customer: John Redfish
Subject: faulty LCD TV set
Retailer: Comet
Date of purchase: 6/07/2008
Price: £800

The LCD TV broke down after 18 months. The purchaser went to the store and the retailer told him the LCD TV was out of warranty. He claimed that this was impossible since by law all goods have a two years warranty. The retailer told the customer to contact the LCD TV manufacturer. The customer is outraged since he insists that he deserves an explanation as to why such an expensive LCD TV, which is only 18 months old, should break down, and he wants his problem solved at once. He is prepared to proceed with an legal action if he does not receive a response within fourteen days.
**Appendix 6 – Multiple intelligences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The <strong>linguistic intelligence</strong> involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. It also includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The <strong>logical-mathematical intelligence</strong> entails analysing problems logically, carrying out mathematical operations, and investigating issues scientifically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The <strong>musical intelligence</strong> involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns, as well as encompassing the ability to recognise and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The <strong>bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence</strong> requires the potential of using one’s whole body or parts of the body to solve problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The <strong>spatial intelligence</strong> involves the recognition and usage of the patterns of wide space and more confined areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The <strong>interpersonal intelligence</strong> is the ability to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people, hence allowing people to work effectively with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The <strong>intrapersonal intelligence</strong> entails the ability to understand oneself, to appreciate one’s feelings, fears and motivations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The <strong>naturalist intelligence</strong> enables human beings to recognise, categorise and draw upon certain features of the environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted and abridged from *Frames of Mind* (1999:41-48)
Appendix 7 – Sample emails from students with the results of the MI test

Email 1

From: matilderperes@hotmail.com
To: helenaoliveira.cm@gmail.com
Subject: RE: Multiple Intelligence's Test
Date: Sat, 18 Sep 2010 00:08:37

hii teacher ^^

code:
2qtn7it22560

XXX

Email 2

From: jane.280@hotmail.com
To: helenaoliveira.cm@gmail.com
Subject: RE: Multiple Intelligence's Test
Date: Sun, 19 Sep 2010 19:12

Greetings Miss Mel,

here's the code you asked for
2j7nwg98379b

All the best,
Appendix 8 – Questions for the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1 - REMEMBERING</th>
<th>LEVEL 2 - UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>LEVEL 3 - APPLYING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.</td>
<td>Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key Words & Questions

<table>
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<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
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</table>

### Level 4 - Analyzing

Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.

### Key Words & Questions

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<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
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### Level 5 - Evaluating

Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

### Key Words & Questions

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### Level 6 - Creating

Complete information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

### Key Words & Questions

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<td>modify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>original</td>
<td>originate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>originate</td>
<td>originate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plan</td>
<td>plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predict</td>
<td>predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proposal</td>
<td>proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solve</td>
<td>solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suppose</td>
<td>suppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theory</td>
<td>theory</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: http://tinyurl.com/3e9dlu9
## Appendix 9 – Scales from the CEF: Overall written production, creative writing, reports and essays, overall written interaction and processing text

### Table 1.1 Overall written production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Council of Europe, 2001:61)

### Table 1.2. Creative Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can write clear, smoothly flowing, and fully engrossing stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences, marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest. Can write a review of a film, book or play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write about everyday aspects of his/her environment, e.g. people, places, a job or study experience in linked sentences. Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can write simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Council of Europe, 2001:62)
**Table 1.3. Reports and Essays**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and nonroutine matters within his/her field with some confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write very brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>No descriptor available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Council of Europe, 2001:62)

**Table 1.4. Overall written interaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>As C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can express him/herself with clarity and precision, relating to the addresses and effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can express news and views effectively in writing, and relate to those of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can convey information and ideas on abstract as well as concrete topics, check information and ask about or explain problems with reasonable precision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information of immediate relevance, getting across the point he/she feels to be important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Council of Europe, 2009:136)

**Table 1.5. Processing Text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>As C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can express him/herself with clarity and precision, relating to the addresses and effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can express news and views effectively in writing, and relate to those of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can convey information and ideas on abstract as well as concrete topics, check information and ask about or explain problems with reasonable precision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information of immediate relevance, getting across the point he/she feels to be important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Council of Europe, 2009:140)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Coherence</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Argument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can write clearly, logically, and smoothly flowing complex texts in an appropriate and effective personal and public style conveying their shades of meaning. Can use a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</td>
<td>Shows great flexibility in formulating ideas in organizing forms and conveying their shades of meaning precisely to give emphasis and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of holistic expressions and analogies.</td>
<td>Can create coherent and cohesive texts making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.</td>
<td>Maintains consistent and highly accurate grammatical control of even the most complex language forms. Errors are rare and often rarely used forms.</td>
<td>Can write clear, smooth flowing and fully engaging stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.</td>
<td>Can produce clear, smooth flowing, complex reports, articles and essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can write well-structured and clearly accurate texts of complex subjects. Can underline the relevant salient points, expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and round off with an appropriate conclusion.</td>
<td>Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express himself/herself clearly in an appropriate style or on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say. The facility in style and tone is somewhat limited.</td>
<td>Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured text, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</td>
<td>Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy, occasional errors in grammar, collocations and syntax.</td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in a formally assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.</td>
<td>Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support point of view with some subsidiary points, reasons and examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed official and semi-official texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesizing and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Can make a distinction between formal and informal language with occasional less formal expressions.</td>
<td>Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, using some complex sentence forms to do so. Language tends, however, expressionism and idiomatic and use of more complex forms is still problematic.</td>
<td>Can use a number of cohesive devices to link further sentences into clear, coherent text, though there may be some &quot;jumpiness&quot; in a longer text.</td>
<td>Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Can write detailed, clear descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences making the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned.</td>
<td>Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of some significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving some reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. The text is understandable but occasional unclear expressions and occasional inaccuracies may cause a break-up in reading.</td>
<td>Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express himself/herself with some circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.</td>
<td>Can link a series of shorter discrete elements into a connected, linear text.</td>
<td>Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used &quot;cliches&quot; and patterns associated with more common situations. Occasionally makes errors that the reader usually can interpret correctly on the basis of the context.</td>
<td>Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text.</td>
<td>Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarise, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on a familiar routine and non-routine matters, within his field with some confidence. Can write very brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like &quot;and&quot;, &quot;but&quot;, and &quot;because&quot;. Longer texts may contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text hard to understand.</td>
<td>Uses basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information mainly in everyday situations.</td>
<td>Can link groups of words with simple connectors like &quot;and&quot;, &quot;but&quot;, and &quot;because&quot;.</td>
<td>Uses simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes. Errors may sometimes cause misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences. Can write short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. Longer texts contain expressions and show coherence problems which make the text hard to understand.</td>
<td>Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.</td>
<td>Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like &quot;and&quot; and &quot;then&quot;.</td>
<td>Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorized repertoire. Errors may cause misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10 – Types of texts present in our English syllabus

Appendix 11 – Special Eurobarometer – Europeans and their languages

Appendix 12 – Extract from the school’s project

Introdução

Uma Escola é uma organização dinâmica, aberta ao meio que a envolve e do qual participa, e em que, por isso, a capacidade de adaptação é a principal garantia de estabilidade.

A Escola pensa-se a si própria através do Projecto Educativo que elabora, instrumento de gestão estratégica ajustado à realidade, e que contém, por definição, uma ideia de futuro perfilhada por toda a comunidade educativa, constituindo a expressão da sua identidade.

O que caracteriza um sistema inteligente - e uma escola tem, necessariamente, de o ser - é a adequação de um projecto original próprio às condições do tempo e do espaço em que se situa, e não a mera repetição de modos de fazer ou pensar.

Desde a fundação do Colégio Moderno em 1936 pelo Professor João Soares, os princípios de que não abdicamos são, justamente, aqueles que admitem a singularidade por aceitarem a pluralidade, e que defendem o respeito pelo indivíduo, na sua diferença e naquilo que o une aos outros: a dignidade e liberdade do espírito humano, única condição absoluta e a razão de ser do trabalho educativo.

2. O Aluno - Sujeito e Objecto do Processo de Ensino-Aprendizagem

O Colégio Moderno defende uma prática pedagógica que coloca o aluno no centro das aprendizagens. Estas são diversificadas e contemplam os diferentes ritmos e necessidades de cada um.

O esforço e empenho, a capacidade de trabalho e perseverança do aluno, são permanentemente valorizados e incentivados no sentido do reforço da confiança, da auto-estima e do mérito, fundamentais ao bom desenvolvimento das capacidades individuais na realização escolar.

A reflexão sobre o próprio processo de aprendizagem, através da observação e do contacto com pessoas e instituições, é estimulado e concorre para um melhor conhecimento dos outros e de si.

O desenvolvimento de metodologias activas e inovadoras que apelem à participação do aluno na construção das suas aprendizagens, conduz a uma crescente autonomia e a uma permanente reflexão crítica.

Ajudar o aluno a utilizar as tecnologias de informação como instrumentos de trabalho habituais e quotidiano, sem descurar a importância relacional do trabalho em grupo, e apoiar um saudável espírito competitivo, mantendo as relações de entre-ajuda e de solidariedade com os outros, são passos fundamentais na preparação de um cidadão trabalhador e responsável.

Adoptando o conceito de escola inclusiva, o Colégio atende às especificidades pedagógicas dos alunos com necessidades educativas especiais, no sentido da plena integração e de individualizar e personalizar as estratégias educativas, como método de prossecução do objectivo de promover competências universais que permitam a autonomia e o acesso à plena cidadania por todos.

A avaliação privilegia, para além dos produtos da aprendizagem, os processos subjacentes e o esforço do aluno numa perspectiva essencialmente qualitativa.

Source: www.colegiomoderno.pt
## Table of contents

**MODULE 1 – The World Around Us**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural contents</th>
<th>Reading/Listening</th>
<th>Focus on Language</th>
<th>Writing/Speaking</th>
<th>@ Quest</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>- Tsunami survivor stories</td>
<td>- Giving warnings (imperative)</td>
<td>- Writing a summary</td>
<td>Tsunami victims</td>
<td>8-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Film covers/trailers</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOS Planet</td>
<td>- Calvin and Hobbes</td>
<td>- Past and Present Simple Tenses</td>
<td>- Are you eco-friendly? - class discussion</td>
<td>Actions Speak Louder</td>
<td>14-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The Destruction of the Ancient Rainforest</td>
<td>- Coordinating conjunctions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The Human Footprint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Action</td>
<td>- Leopards subdued by &quot;Moving&quot;</td>
<td>- Present Tense: Present continuous</td>
<td>- How far are people willing to go to protect and save planet Earth? - group discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>- &quot;Radical Change&quot;</td>
<td>- Extreme Environmentalist on</td>
<td>- Simple Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Going Green</td>
<td>- Electric Vehicles</td>
<td>- Present Perfect</td>
<td>- Eco-terrorism</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Greening the High Street</td>
<td>- How Green is your High Street?</td>
<td>- Homonyms</td>
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<tr>
<td>- TreePeople</td>
<td>- Planting a tree...</td>
<td>- Questions in indirect speech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being a Volunteer</td>
<td>- Volunteer!</td>
<td>- Present Perfect Simple</td>
<td>- Informative handout</td>
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<td>- Cross-cultural solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ecosystem: writing</td>
<td>- Sustainable Urban Forest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Lifestyles</td>
<td>- Travellers in the UK</td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td>- Portuguese organizations</td>
<td>Similar Portuguese Vegetarian Org.</td>
<td>26-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New Age Travellers/</td>
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<td>- Commentary: writing a paragraph</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Travellers/Therapy (extract)</td>
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<td>- Vegan Society</td>
<td>- Raw Vegans: interview</td>
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<td>Artificial Life</td>
<td>- First Artificial Life &quot;within months&quot;</td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td>- Pros and Cons: writing/discussion</td>
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<td>43-51</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cosmetic Surgery</td>
<td>- Kids gotta have it too; A cartoon; Face facts; Cosmetic surgery: Deep scar</td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td>- Synopsis</td>
<td></td>
<td>52-57</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Zombie</td>
<td>- Meet Eclipse</td>
<td>- IF-classes: I, II, III</td>
<td>- What will/would/would have...? writing/speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Nanotechnology</td>
<td>- Reporting</td>
<td>- Artificial crossing; debate/writing conclusions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pharmacogenomics</td>
<td>- Genetics holds Key to the treatment of illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>- DNA test that can give you the surprise of your life</td>
<td>- Choosing a job related to health: writing/speaking</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
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<td>70-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-check</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>72-73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix 13 – Table of contents taken from Easy Biz**
### MODULE 2 – Teen World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural contents</th>
<th>Reading/Listening</th>
<th>Focus on Language</th>
<th>Writing/Speaking</th>
<th>Quest</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Tech Teens</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Pressure</td>
<td>- Thirteen</td>
<td>- Defining/</td>
<td>- Writing an end to a story</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>76-84</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Labels</td>
<td>non-defining</td>
<td>- Being part of a tribe: pair</td>
<td>±</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Body Image and Self-Esteem</td>
<td>relative clauses</td>
<td>discussion/writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- So and such</td>
<td>- Agreeing/disagreeing: writing</td>
<td>±</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Role Models</td>
<td>- TV role models</td>
<td>Word formation II:</td>
<td>- Role models: paragraph</td>
<td>85-92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- &quot;The Reach panel of experts...&quot;</td>
<td>- Affixation</td>
<td>writing: discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulate</td>
<td>- Compounding</td>
<td>- Gadgets: writing advantages/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Modal Verbs</td>
<td>disadvantages: discussion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen-Gadgets</td>
<td>- Testing for gold at the mobile</td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td>- SMS: class discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>93-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phone olympics</td>
<td>- Word formation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- iWait for iPhone</td>
<td>III: conversion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities and Diets</td>
<td>- Angelina gets...</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Living on diets: paragraph</td>
<td>98-101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Phrasal Verbs</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2: Food for Teens</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Un)Balanced diets</td>
<td>- Jen Hunter: I've never been heavier or happier</td>
<td>- Adjective degrees</td>
<td>- Writing an argumentative text</td>
<td>102-113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Geri Halliwell and Jessica Simpson</td>
<td>- Writing a magazine article</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Restaurant Food Shockers</td>
<td>- Your food pyramid: writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Size Matters</td>
<td>- Slideshow presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My Manifesto for school dinners</td>
<td>- Adjective degrees</td>
<td>- Leaflet writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Writing an argumentative text</td>
<td>- Two ways of life: writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diets and School</td>
<td>- Rephrasing</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Writing a manifesto</td>
<td>114-117</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jamie Oliver</td>
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<td>Forehead advertising</td>
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<td>118-121</td>
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<td><strong>Unit 3: Teens and Ads</strong></td>
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<td>Different Sorts of Ads</td>
<td>- ... advertising goes mainstream</td>
<td>- Forehead advertising: writing</td>
<td>- Does advertising influence or reflect teen culture? debate</td>
<td>122-125</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Five ads</td>
<td>- Counter-ad: writing</td>
<td>- Reflect teen culture? debate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teens as Targets</td>
<td>- Slogans</td>
<td>- Questions in English I</td>
<td>- Job sharing: writing</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why and how marketers target kids</td>
<td>- Why and how marketers target kids</td>
<td>- Restaurant Food Shockers</td>
<td>126-131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Questions in English I</td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConsumErism and Rights</td>
<td>- Popular complaints</td>
<td>- Giving advice</td>
<td>- Writing a letter of complaint</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Schemes</td>
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<td>- Letters of complaint</td>
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<td>Projects</td>
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<td>132-133</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-check</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>134-135</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### MODULE 3 – The World of Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural contents</th>
<th>Reading/Listening</th>
<th>Focus on Language</th>
<th>Writing/Speaking</th>
<th>Quest</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Telework World</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CBI welcomes...</td>
<td>- Passive voice</td>
<td>- Commentary: writing</td>
<td>±</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Vocabulary work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## MODULE 4 - A Multicultural World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocultural contents</th>
<th>Reading/Listening</th>
<th>Focus on Language</th>
<th>Writing/Speaking</th>
<th>@ Quest</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>- What exactly is multiculturalism?</td>
<td>- The bare infinitive/the full infinitive</td>
<td>- Should immigrants assimilate the culture of the host country?: writing/speaking</td>
<td>How Britain became a mixed race society</td>
<td>200-205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>- Opinion: Super-diversity revealed</td>
<td>- Rephrasing</td>
<td>- Filling in a mind map</td>
<td>206-211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to Life in Britain</td>
<td>- Multiculturalism: the Wembley way</td>
<td>- Infinitive or –ing?</td>
<td>- Writing an opinion article</td>
<td>Languages of London</td>
<td>212-217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down Under Stories</td>
<td>- Multicultural New Zealand</td>
<td>- Adjectives + prepositions</td>
<td>- Writing a personal journal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Migration Stories</td>
<td>Pacific Solution...</td>
<td>- Writing a story (based on pictures)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Projects
- 234-235
- 236-237

### Self-check solutions
- 238-239

Appendix 14 – Reading comprehension questions

C. Read the text again and...
1. explain the main differences between these two organizations: Treepeople and The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation.
2. state your opinion about the importance of this kind of environmental actions.
3. explain in your own words: “We often joke that trees don’t have eyeballs, but the species they support do”, Ms. Gangloff said. “We want to help everyone relate to trees” (last paragraph)

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C. Answer these questions.
1. Summarize Jessica and Geri’s diets and fitness programs.
2. Why do you think Now magazine chose these women?
3. What kind of magazine publishes this type of article? Why does it exploit famous people’s images?
4. What is the message conveyed by both articles?
5. Do you often read this kind of magazine article? Why? Why not?

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2. Answer the following questions.
   a) Why is there some debate over Kamprad being declared wealthier than Bill Gates?
   b) How old is IKEA?
   c) What is meant by “a sort of makeshift mail order operation”?
   d) How did he keep the costs down in IKEA?
   e) Why was the IKEA showroom so important when it first opened?
   f) How innovative was it?

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B. Now answer these questions about the texts.
1. What do these four thinkers’ perspectives have in common?
2. They offer two different definitions of multiculturalism. Write both.
3. What leads to the full integration of newcomers?
4. What is Britishness?

C. Explain the following statements.
1. “Britishness is a strong concept but not all-embracing.” (text 1, l. 16)
2. “It is a positive acceptance not a negative tolerance.” (text 2, l. 12)
3. “But we cannot have cultural diversity without tackling inequalities.” (text 4, l. 4-5)

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XXIII
Appendix 15 – Listening comprehension questions

## READING

Leopards Subdued by "Mooing" 1 2

Kate Ravilious for National Geographic News, June 5, 2007

When leopards approach, your cell phone's 3 could save your life, according to a new program in the western Indian state of Gujarat. Villagers there are now using “clucking”, “bleating”, and “mooning” ringtones to 4 the big cats and 5 them away from 6 settlements. By attaching a mobile phone to a 7 and playing one of the 8 ringtones continuously, local forest guards can lure the 9 into the trap without harm. "The moos of a 10 or bleating of a 11 from the phone has proved effective”, D. Vasani, a senior forest official, told the Reuters news service. Since the new ringtone 12 was introduced a month ago, guards have captured five leopards and 13 them successfully back into forests.

phones lure distract goat released cow ringtone cage leopard cell animal method human

## LISTENING

### Restaurant Food Shockers

**A. Listen carefully to DietDetective.com Podcast and say if the following statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.**

1. It is believed that, if you want to eat healthy in a restaurant, all you should do is ordering the right food.

2. When customers order grilled food, most of them assume such food will be cooked on a flat-topped grill.

3. Chicken producers never inject chicken with a sodium solution to add flavour.

4. You should call the restaurant chef or the manager if you think your food might contain allergens.

**B. Now complete the following sentences according to what you have just listened to.**

1. If food is cooked on a flat top grill, some type of grease or oil is necessary to...
   a) ____________;
   b) ____________;
   c) ____________;

2. If the restaurant uses a flat top grill, you should request food grilled ____________.

3. Almost ____________ have allergies to foods.

4. American people are allergic to ____________.

---

Appendix 16 – Grammar exercises

D. Complete the sentences.
1. If we changed a mentally ill person’s DNA, that person __________________________.
2. People’s health will improve and new diseases will be targeted if ________________________.
3. If James Watson had discovered DNA earlier, ________________________________.
4. Nurses will have an easier job in the hospital if ________________________________.
5. Autism, schizophrenia and other illnesses would be controlled if ____________________.
6. Come on! If scientists stop being curious, what ________________________________?
7. This planet would change a lot if ________________________________.

FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

A. Rephrase the following sentences:
1. People believe laptops make home working easier.
   It ________________________________.
2. Nowadays people can opt for e-work. Laptops have become cheaper and cheaper.
   If ________________________________.
3. E-workers sometimes go to the office. They need to discuss projects with managers.
   ________________________________, so that ________________________________.
4. E-workers do not work at home all the time. They would not mind doing that.
   Despite ________________________________.
5. Information technology makes it possible for him/her/them to work from anywhere in the
   world. You just need to have the right tools.
   If ________________________________.
6. Companies have built in safer networks. They want to allow workers to connect anytime and
   anywhere.
   In order to ________________________________.
Appendix 17 – Purposeful writing activities

This activity in particular was adapted, and instead of writing a poster students wrote an article for a teens’ magazine.

This activity was also adapted. Students either wrote a letter of complaint about a T-shirt they had bought, which was wrongly labelled, or wrote about a bad shopping experience.

Appendix 18 – Example from “How to…” section from Easy Biz workbook

**HOW TO WRITE A REPORT**

A. Follow these steps.

1. Research – find the relevant information on the topic you have to write about in a book, cd-rom or on the internet. You may find what you need in the public or school library. Write down your research information and answers on your notebook.

2. Outline – sketch out what you want to do and this sketch should include at least:
   a) introduction;
   b) central sections with headings, details of your research, ideas and arguments;
   c) summary and / or conclusion.

3. Write down a rough sketch. Proofread it and then correct possible mistakes and errors (spelling, grammar, mixed up ideas or missing points).

4. Rewrite the report. Add pictures if you want to.

**NOTE:**

1. If you use information from the internet, make sure it is from a reliable source.

2. Do not take someone’s information for your own (mention their references on the bibliography).

**HOW TO WRITE AN ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT**

1. Write the questions in your own words.

2. Read and research to determine facts and their reliability.

3. Unveil the prejudice that may lie in the argument.

4. List facts according to their importance, find out if something is missing or if it should be discarded.

5. Highlight the hotspots of your argument.

**Writing process**

1. Start writing as close as possible to your readings and research.

2. On the first paragraph:
   a) introduce the topic;
   b) inform the reader of your argument;
   c) tease the reader to continue reading your text.

3. Focus the development of your writing on three main points.

4. Don’t forget to establish flow and cohesion from paragraph to paragraph.

5. Quote researched sources to establish authority.

6. Keep on focused on your argument, suggest logical arguments.

7. Don’t summarize while on the development.

8. Write the conclusion; sum up your argument and then conclude.

9. Restate the main ideas of your text.

Students are given instructions on how to write a report. However, the course book does not include one in its proposal for writing assignments.

Appendix 19 – Postcard used with other 11th grade classes - Diagnostic test

A stroll in Bray by Rasher by DART
Appendix 20 – Sample of students’ feedback on each of the writing assignments

**Written assignment 1: Diagnostic test**

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☑️
- interesting? ☑️
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?
- The free writing exercise gave us a chance to imagine and express ourselves in a creative way.

**Written assignment 1: Diagnostic test**

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☑️
- interesting? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?
- I found this activity motivating because it gave us more freedom to write about what we wanted. It was different from the other diagnostic tests that we’ve done. In my opinion I passed this way.

**Written assignment 2: writing a report**

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☑️
- interesting? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐
- engaging? ☐

Any personal comments?
- Environmental protection measures to be taken in school... It’s always good to have ideas and able to see them applied.

**Written assignment 3: writing an argumentative essay (My sister’s keeper)**

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☑️
- interesting? ☑️
- engaging? ☑️
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?
- We had to share our own feelings.
- Strong topic.

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Written assignment 4: writing an article

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ✗
- interesting? ☑
- engaging? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Name: ____________________________

Any personal comments?

It was really good writing an article because definitely it will help me in my future if I decide to be a reporter.

Written assignment 5: writing a paragraph (Inside Job)

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☐
- interesting? ☑
- engaging? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?

This activity was very interesting because we shared our ideas and our point of view between each other and teachers.

Written assignment 6: writing a summary (multiculturalism)

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☐
- interesting? ☑
- engaging? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?

The subject was interesting and summarising is a very important skill.

Written assignment 7: writing an essay (Names, Maya Angelou)

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☐
- interesting? ☑
- engaging? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?

I think it was interesting, because we could see how black people were treated by each other people then. Also, it was very exciting. A short story and this activity helped us clear any ideas and think more about this topic.

Written assignment 8: opinion paragraph on a film, La Haine

Did you find the activity...
- motivating? ☑
- interesting? ☐
- engaging? ☐
- boring? ☐
- stressful? ☐

Any personal comments?

It was motivating, because although the children did not speak the same language, they could communicate when the need to communicate is strong. There is always a way to do it.
Appendix 21 – Samples from diagnostic test

Sample a)

It was 18th Century, the time when high society was very important. A very wealthy scientist decided to give a very important party with other very important scientists to discuss cultural and many science issues of their time. His name was Sir Philip. But a very important scientist had his enemi, Mackov, a Russian scientist, that made every thing to kill Sir Philip. However, when he had a new plan, to take (him) his most precious treasure. In the party he had a very good opportunity to execute his plan. He bought a gun and on his first opportunity he shot Sir Philip’s wife in the head. Wondered Sir Philip couldn’t believe what happened to him, he became so depressed that he decided to run away from there.

He traveled (up) the world, and he visited the entire Europe, America and so many other places. But one night, he had a dream, where it was his wife telling him a very strange event, an invention that would change the world. So he build his invention in ten years and when he finished he knew to name it “Lamp”.

It became very successful. A company was created with his name “Philip’s”. But then, he realized that without killing him self, he doesn’t want to live so long or so soon without his wife. And he was sad that to invent the lamp, knowing that his wife had to died.

you need to organise your ideas better. There are only two paragraphs in your story, and many events. Link them better. Well done!

This student came up with an interesting story, but was unable to link all the paragraphs in a coherent way. That made his story look confusing at times.
Sample b)

This student had a lot of difficulty in getting started, which is also evident from her text. It is not clearly organised and the story itself lacks content. It could be much better organised had she planned it beforehand, or written about something which had happened to her (suggestion given by the teacher for those students who had no ideas to get started).
## Appendix 22 – Common Reference Levels – Self-assessment grid for writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **C2** | I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style.  
I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.  
I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works. |
| **C1** | I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length.  
I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues.  
I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind. |
| **B2** | I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests.  
I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view.  
I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences. |
| **B1** | I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.  
I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions. |
| **A2** | I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs.  
I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something. |
| **A1** | I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings.  
I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form. |

CoE, 2001:26-27
Appendix 23 – Questionnaire about students’ attitudes to writing - results

11th grade class of thirty students

1. **How do feel about writing?**
   - a. A very important skill: 4
   - b. As important as all the other skills: 20
   - c. Not so important as speaking: 6
   - d. Not important at all: 0
   - e. Other: 0

2. **How do you usually feel when you are asked to write a text?**
   - a. Interested: 12
   - b. Enthusiastic: 4
   - c. Incapable: 5
   - d. Bored: 8
   - e. Other: Indifferent: 1

3. **Written homework is...**
   - a. An important part of my assessment: 4
   - b. Frequently done with someone else: 2
   - c. Is a useful way of practising English: 20
   - d. A waste of time: 4
   - e. Other: 0

4. **What are the most difficult characteristics of writing for you?**
   - a. Remembering grammar: 2
   - b. Remember vocabulary: 11
   - c. Organising: 5
   - d. Thinking about arguments, points and ideas: 5
   - e. Planning: 5
   - f. Spelling: 2

5. **What is the most frequent impediment to beginning a writing task?**
   - a. The topic: 5
   - b. Lack of ideas: 10
   - c. Time: 1
   - d. Fear of making mistakes: 4
   - e. Not knowing how to begin (lack of plan): 10
   - f. Other: 0

6. **What would help you to improve this situation?**
   - a. If I was allowed to be more creative: 0
   - b. If the teacher gave me more help with organisation and planning: 2
   - c. If the teacher gave me more help with vocabulary: 10
   - d. If the teacher gave me more help with grammar: 2
   - e. If the teacher chose more interesting topics: 16
### 7. When writing a formal composition, your most important concern should be…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The structure of the composition</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The ideas expressed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The accuracy in English</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Use of the appropriate register</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. When you write your composition…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. you always write a clear plan first.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. you begin immediately - the plan is in my head.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. the plan appears after you've started</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. a plan is not necessary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. you don't have time to make a plan.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9. How should teachers correct your writing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Just correct the grammar mistakes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Correct all grammar, vocabulary and spelling/punctuation mistakes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Just correct the organisational mistakes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The teacher should try to write a 'good' version of what I was trying to say</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other: Correct some grammar mistakes and all organisational mistakes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 10. What is the first thing you do when you receive your work from the teacher?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Look at the mark</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Feel demoralised by the amount of corrections</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Read the teacher's comments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Analyse my mistakes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. What do you do with the corrected version of your written work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. File out</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Try to correct the mistakes identified</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. List and classify the mistakes to avoid repetition</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ask my teacher to explain</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12. List in order of frequency your main reason for writing in Portuguese:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. For pleasure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Necessity e.g. leaving notes or texting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. As part of my studies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I rarely write anything</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Other:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 13. List in order of importance your reasons for writing in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. To provide marks for the teacher</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. To improve my knowledge of English</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. To improve my writing skills</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. To practise something I've learnt</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. To express ideas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 14. Do you think it is useful to write in class with somebody else?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### If yes, why?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. It helps me clarify my own thoughts.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The final product is better.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. It produces more ideas.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Other:</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>

### If no, why?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. It prevents me from clearly expressing my own thoughts.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The final product is not mine.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The other student(s) dominate(s) the activity.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Other:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 15. How do you see writing?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. As a difficult but necessary task.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. As a way of creating homework.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. As a creative process</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. As a means of communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. As something I have to do</td>
<td>2</td>
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f. Online video games with people from other countries. 1

g. Necessity, e.g. Homework or writing essays 1
Appendix 24 – Handout on how to write a report

An International magazine is investigating tourism in various areas around the world. You have been asked to write a report for the magazine’s editors, addressing the following questions:

- How has tourism in Prague changed over the last decade?
- What are the reasons for these changes?
- What problems exist and can anything be done to solve them?

Write your report.

USEFUL PHRASES

Introduction
The following report evaluates/ describes/ presents/ provides an account of…

This report aims to provide an overall view of the situation.

I shall describe the situation below.

Main body
a popular destination
easy to reach by rail/road/air
holidays to Prague are widely advertised
overcharge
service in hotels
It is generally accepted that…
The vast majority of visitors…
This is probably due to the fact that…
While data is hard to come by, it is thought that…

Conclusion
One measure which may improve the situation would be to introduce…

I am of the opinion that…
It is my view/opinion that…
On balance, it appears that…
Tourism in Prague

Introduction
The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in the number of tourists visiting the Czech Republic in general and Prague in particular. The following report presents a brief overview.

Background
Until 1989, Prague was not a popular destination for tourists from western Europe due to a number of reasons:

- The city was difficult to reach; visitors often had to wait for long periods at border crossings.
- There was little information about trips to Prague in foreign travel agencies.
- Some people felt nervous about trips to countries in central and eastern Europe.

Changes
All the above factors have changed dramatically: Prague is now easy to reach by road, rail and air; trips to Prague are widely advertised in western countries; few visitors feel nervous about visiting a country in eastern Europe any more.

Criticisms
The majority of visitors to Prague are extremely satisfied on the whole; however, there are a few complaints about two specific areas:

- taxi drivers acting in a rude manner and, in many cases, overcharging.
- hotels providing less than adequate service.

Future Development
The city council is at present considering stricter laws relating to taxi drivers. Moreover, the local tourist authority is reclassifying the hotels in the city.

Conclusion
While Prague can offer visitors a generally positive experience, there are some issues which need to be addressed. I am of the opinion that better regulation of taxi drivers and hotels will solve these problems.
1. Look at the structure of report and write 1-7 to show the correct order.
   a. Conclusion ___
   b. Title ___
   c. Main Sections ___ ___ ___ ___
   d. Introduction ___

2. Under which heading does the writer talk about
   a. the disadvantages of travelling to Prague in the past
   b. the topic dealt with
   c. how some of the information was obtained
   d. the new changes happening in the country
   e. the aims of the report

3. Tick the things which are used to make reports easier to read.
   a. Bullet points ___
   b. Underlining ___
   c. Numbers ___
   d. Headings ___

4. Which of these best describe the style? Tick one or more of the boxes.
   a. Impersonal and formal ___
   b. Personal and informal ___
   c. Clear and neutral ___
   d. Balanced, showing positive and negative points faintly ___

5. Match these phrases normally used in reports with their descriptions.
   a. On the whole ___ 1 Stating the aim
   b. Clearly ___ 2 Saying what people said
   c. We should ___ 3 Showing your attitude indirectly
   d. Everyone agrees that ___ 4 Making a generalisation
   e. The purpose of ... is to___ 5 Recommending

Learning TIP
Before you write a report, think carefully about its aim, collect the data and organise it carefully. In the report, state the aim clearly and lay the report out in a way that makes it easy to read with simple headings, bullet points or numbers for a list etc. Often busy readers will only read the conclusion/recommendations, so make this section as clear and concise as possible.
You have been asked to write up these notes in the form of a report. The report should have the following title: **REPORT ON MAIN CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FACING OUR COUNTRY**

1. **Read the notes on the right and answer these questions.**
   
   a. What are the three main problems?
   
   b. What successes have there been?
   
   c. Is enough being done to improve the situation?

2. **Read the unedited report below and answer the questions below.**
   
   a. Is there a clear overall structure to the report?
   
   b. Has the writer used subheadings below the main headings?
   
   c. Is there an introduction and a conclusion?
   
   d. Is the style always clear and neutral, and appropriate for a report?
   
   e. Has the writer avoided contractions (e.g. we’d), note-like phrases and abbreviations?
   
   f. Can you find at least one example of incorrect grammar and two examples of incorrect punctuation and spelling?

---

### Main Problems

1. **Air Pollution**
   
   Air pollution – serious problems in all the big cities, not just ours – mainly because of exhaust fumes, it is a major cause of disease and respiratory probs.

2. **Water**
   
   The average citizen in our lovely country uses 300 ltrs. a day, and now that there are more us here than there used to be, we’re taking far more water from the ground than goes back in when it rains

3. **Tourism**
   
   because of the number of tourists visiting our country they are destroying sights of nat. beauty

### Successes

1. The air quality’s getting a bit better thanks to the recent controls on vehicles

2. The water companies replacing pipes to reduce the no. of water leaks

3. The government has launched an eco-tourism programme which aim to get tourists to respect environ.

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Now write an improved version of the report. Remember to include an introduction and a conclusion. Use the questions above to help you.
Appendix 25 – Sample report (individual work)

REPORT ON HOW TO MAKE COLÉGIO MODERNO
A MORE ECO-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

Introduction

Over the past few years, Colégio Moderno has been improving its facilities and resources in order to make learning a more interactive, stimulating and pleasant experience. However, this investment has to be not only an advantage for the school’s staff, teachers and students, but also a convenient change for the environment.

What has already been done

1. Recycling

Both plastic and paper recycling bins have been placed all over the school’s premises in order to promote recycling for students and teachers. However, the containers number has decreased since the end of the last school year, which makes recycling harder to do.

2. Saving Paper

Starting this school year, almost all the communication between the school and parents has become electronic, thus making the use of paper an obsolete thing. We have also transformed the register book into an electronic form to reduce paper spending.

What may be environmentally beneficial

1. Saving Power

The use of energy efficient light bulbs, and placement of photovoltaic panels in some roofs of the school’s facilities may be an energy saving and eco-friendly solution that would not only reduce the school’s spending on electricity but indirectly contribute to the reduction of gas emissions caused by the grid’s energy production methods.

Conclusion

Despite the environmental friendly actions already been done by our school, we can actually go further in our attempt to make it greener. We are not still at full thrust in what comes to preserving the environment.

Very good conclusion and it keeps us hopeful about the future.

11th IA

Well done!

Clearly organised, you’ve done your research and carefully planned your report.
Appendix 26 – Extract from My Sister’s Keeper & writing assignment instructions

Read the following text about Anna Fitzgerald and her family carefully:

When I was little, the great mystery to me wasn’t how babies were made, but why. The mechanics I understood – my older brother Jesse filled me in – although at the time I was sure he’d heard half of it wrong. Now that I am thirteen, these distinctions are only more complicated. I’m telling you, if aliens landed on earth today and took a good hard look at why babies are born, they’d conclude that most people have children for the wrong reasons. On the other hand, I was born for a very specific reason. I was born because a scientist managed to hook up my mother’s eggs and my father’s sperm to create a specific combination of precious genetic material. In fact, when Jesse told me how babies were made and I, the great disbeliever, decided to ask my parents the truth, I got more than I’d bargained for. They sat me down and told me all the usual stuff, of course – but they also explained that they chose little embryonic me, specifically, because I could save my sister, Kate. “We love you even more,” my mother made sure to say, “because we knew exactly what we were getting.”

It made me wonder, though, what would have happened if Kate had been healthy. Chances are, I’d still be floating up in Heaven or wherever, waiting to be attached to a body to spend some time on earth. Certainly I would not be part of this family. See, unlike the rest of the free world, I didn’t get here by accident. And if your parents have you for a reason, then that reason better exist. Because once it’s gone, so are you.

My parents tried to make things normal, but that’s a relative term. The truth is, I was never really a kid. To be honest, neither were Kate and Jesse. I guess maybe my brother had his moment in the sun for the four years he was alive before Kate got diagnosed, but ever since then, we’ve been too busy looking over our shoulders to run headlong into growing up. You know how most little kids think they’re like cartoon characters – if an anvil drops on their heads they can peel themselves off the sidewalk and keep going? Well, I never once believed that. How could I, when we practically set a place for Death at the dinner table?

Kate has acute promyelocytic leukaemia. Actually, that’s not quite true – right now she doesn’t have it, but it’s hibernating under her skin like a bear, until it decides to roar again. She was diagnosed when she was two; she’s sixteen now. Molecular relapse and granulocyte and portacath – these words are part of my vocabulary, even though I’ll never find them on any SAT.¹ I’m an allogeneic donor – a perfect sibling match. When Kate needs leukocytes or stem cells or bone marrow to fool her body into thinking it’s healthy, I’m the one who provides them. The only reason I was born was as a harvest crop for Kate.


¹ SAT – abbreviation for Scholastic Aptitude Test (US)
1. Complete the following sentences according to the ideas expressed in the text:

1.1. As a child, Anna found it_______________________________________________.

1.2. When Anna decided to ask her parents the truth, they not only___________________________

1.3. If Kate had been healthy, Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald________________
    and so_____________________.

1.4. While growing up, Anna and her siblings_____________________________________________.

2. Answer the following questions, in about 40 words each, using your own words as far as possible:

2.1. Why do you think Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald love their daughter Anna even more?

2.2. What does the author mean when she says “(…) it’s hibernating under her skin like a bear, until decides to roar again” (lines 22/23)?

3. Read the following quote by the author, Jodi Picoult.

“I personally am pro stem-cell research – there’s too much good it can do to simply dismiss it. However, clearly, it’s a slippery slope… and sometimes researchers and political candidates get so bogged down in the ethics behind it and the details of science that they forget completely we’re talking about humans with feelings and emotions and hopes and fears, like Anna and her family.”

In about 150 words, write a composition saying whether you feel it is ethical to conceive a child that meets specific genetic requirements and why.
Appendix 27 – Sample essay from a student on *My Sister’s Keeper*

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we should not play God

I think that if being ethical means to act according to the beliefs and principles we think are the correct and right ones, then in the case of the Fitzgerald’s family the parents were acting ethically because they were thinking that conceiving a child with specific genetic requirements was the right option to save Kate’s life.

On the other hand this issue is also unethical because by conceiving the child, Anna, they didn’t think about the consequences of such a decision. Anna is a person and so she has the freedom to choose by herself. That way, when we conceive a child that meets specific genetic requirements we have to think that we are creating a living being with all the rights and characteristics of one.

As far as I am concerned, conceiving a child with a combination of genetic material will lead us to problems that will question a person’s individuality and so it is unethical to do so.

---

Very good! Well organised, clear structure and raises valid points covered in class.
Appendix 28 – Handout: Beauty and Body Image in the Media

Beauty and Body Image in the Media

Images of female bodies are everywhere. Women—and their body parts—sell everything from food to cars. Popular film and television actresses are becoming younger, taller and thinner. Women’s magazines are full of articles urging that if they lose some weight, they’ll have it all—the perfect marriage, loving children, and a rewarding career.

Why are standards of beauty being imposed on women, the majority of whom are naturally larger and more mature than any of the models? The roots, some analysts say, are economic. By presenting an ideal difficult to achieve and maintain, the cosmetic and diet product industries are assured of growth and profits. On the one hand, women who are insecure about their bodies are more likely to buy beauty products, new clothes, and diet aids. But, on the other hand, research indicates that exposure to images of thin, young female bodies is linked to depression, loss of self-esteem and the development of unhealthy eating habits in women and girls.

However, advertising rules the marketplace and in advertising thin is “in.” Twenty years ago, the average model weighed 8 per cent less than the average woman—but today’s models weigh 23 per cent less. Advertisers believe that thin models sell products. When the Australian magazine New Woman recently included a picture of a heavy-set model on its cover, it received a truckload of letters from grateful readers praising the move. But its advertisers complained and the magazine returned to featuring bone-thin models. Advertising Age International concluded that the incident “made clear the influence wielded by advertisers who remain convinced that only thin models spur the sales of beauty products.”

Media activist Jean Kilbourne concludes that, “Women are sold to the diet industry by the magazines we read and the television programmes we watch, almost all of which make us feel anxious about our weight.” Television and movies reinforce the importance of a thin body as a measure of a woman’s worth. Advertisers believe that thin models sell products.

Jean Kilbourne argues that the overwhelming presence of media images of thin women means that real women’s bodies have become invisible in the mass media. The real tragedy, Kilbourne concludes, is that many women internalise these stereotypes, and judge themselves by the beauty industry's standards. Women learn to compare themselves to other women, and to compete with them for male attention.

Source: <www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_beauty.cfm>
Miss World, B. Zephaniah

Miss World

Beauty is about how you behold more than silver more than gold
if I say I am beautiful it means beauty is accessible, beauty is about how you greet de everyday people dat you meet you are beautiful so all rejoice your beauty is a natural choice.

My sister is a beautiful girl she don't want to be Miss World her value is not prize money more value than a pearl my sister is a beautiful girl human delight she could be out of sight but she would rather stay and fight.

Her legs are firm and strong best for self-defence my sister kicks like wildfire so cause her no grievance she won't walk the platform to upsex people's lust and you can't get the number of her height, age or bust, she don’t want to go to the market to be viewed like a slave the viewing time is over put de judge in the grave, she don't need to go to the market 'cause she’s already won beauty contest no contest she don’t need to run.

I talk 'bout people in society who judge you by your looks, den, give you a number dat is written in a book, and, lustful eyes from all around come to look at you, and, day judge your lifetime by a quick interview.

My sister is a beautiful girl But she don’t want to be Miss World her personality cannot be rewarded by no judge or earl.

My sister is a beautiful girl She needs no contest and you can’t put her with another judging who’s the best. And you cannot judge my sister's heart By looking at her breasts.

Benjamin Zephaniah

Source:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/poetry/outloud/zephaniah.shtml (complete poem and audio version)
Appendix 29 – Different types of ads

Source from Image 1:
<http://tinyurl.com/64laeso>

Source from Image 2:
http://tinyurl.com/692p2r4

Source from Image 3:
http://www.frankwbaker.com/lifecereal.jpg

Source from Image 4:
http://tinyurl.com/68fcwyt
Appendix 30 – Women throughout the centuries

Source from Image 1: http://tinyurl.com/5tz4276

Source from Image 2: http://tinyurl.com/6kl7hq6

Source from Image 3: http://tinyurl.com/6ymzbyc
This student wrote a very interesting article, and used her background knowledge to get the reader’s attention. She only needs to work on her organisation skills and pay more attention to the layout so that it looks more appealing to the reader.
Feedback to students was given in class as we went through all their ideas.

Appendix 32 – Measures to save Portugal from the economic crisis

Portugal is a very undeveloped country in what concerns to the existence of all of workers able to be competent at their job and to compete internationally. Accordingly, we should manage to solve this situation, for instance, by instilling a competitive healthy, competent, and working perspective of work and school.

It would be great if those who are leading our country were honest with us, and didn’t take the best decisions for the future generations, and instead of just thinking of their pocket of money.

In order to reduce our debt, Portugal needs to save its reputation and reduce its imports. We also need to buy more national products because almost all the small farmers are drowning their products because supermarkets buy their products to keep the few farmers that can’t compete. I would like to live in a country where all people have equal opportunities to learn and work the best they can. In order to achieve that, we should have free access to university, but only if one achieve certain marks. People with great fortune should be submitted to very high taxes on their estates, their cars, and other luxury goods, because they should be thoroughly negotiated.
Appendix 33 – Sample summary

A good example:

Bernard Crick sees the UK as a multicultural state for a long time, made up of a diverse range of cultures and identities. For him, Britishness is not a single culture.

Both Lee supports multiculturalism as people happily coexisting, accepting each other culture and beliefs; for her, it is a positive acceptance, not a negative tolerance.

For Lord Brenth, multiculturalism means that no culture is perfect and therefore they benefit from a critical dialogue with each other.

In fact, Yvonne Churchman thinks multiculturalism is the fusion of different values and we see that everywhere. Besides, it is the best way to organize a sense of belonging.

An example that needs improvement:

So what exactly is multiculturalism?

In fact, one Sir Bernard Crick (say) that is to be British means to respect the traditional values of Britain (such as law, democracy, parliamentary) and to respect people not being under consideration, their race or culture.

Then Ruth (ex director of the Centre for Policy Studies) tell us that people can interpret multiculturalism in two ways: one, every culture has the right to exist; and two, call it diversity when people have their own culture and beliefs.

Lord Parekh (say) that people should be open, self-critical and interactive with different cultures and peoples.

Chief Executive of the 1956 Trust, Karen Churchman (tell) us that diversity is at the core of government and another institution, that this diversity is good for social movement and for the country itself.

This is a long summary. Try and be more objective as not to refer to unnecessary information. Also, attention to the verb tense you use. They should be the same.
Appendix 34 – Sample essay on “Names” and multiculturalism

This student really enjoyed writing this essay. In his feedback form he mentioned he had felt really engaged.
Appendix 35 – Sample text on “La Fune”

I enjoyed the small movie very much. I think the director has found nice metaphors to explore the multiculturalism. The rope expressing the connection between both cultures and the similar towel expressing what they have in common are the two I’ve liked the most. I also think that it was through each one’s son and daughter that both of the women have overcame their divergences. It means that child, and younger generations in general, can be a great help for adults to become more tolerant and open-minded.

Taken from the student’s notebook.
Appendix 36 – Examples of end-of-the-year feedback on writing assignments

Final comments

This year I really think that the English class inspired me, they were different from the others, more active and dynamic. The teacher, by all let us watching movies, reading so many stories and doing so many activities, are respect to the themes, really helped us not only learning English but also morning us think and grow. I think that some way everyone were off very thankful to the teacher

Final comments

One student book doesn’t have motivating activities. They are always similar between them and too boring. The activities brought by the teacher were always motivating and helped us to exceed our difficulties. These activities helped me to improve my skills (develop my writing and learn vocabulary). Thank you teacher!!!!!!

Final comments

In sum, I must say being honest, that my critical thinking skills were improved. It was a hard work year, with very good and well done activities. Concluding, I would like to share my favourite unity: multiculturalism, specially the story “Nia une”. These last lessons helped me understand the world around me better... Thank you!